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Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2014



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Front-cover photograph: First-winter Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis pallidirostris*, Burnham Norton, Norfolk, October 2014. *Robin Chittenden*



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


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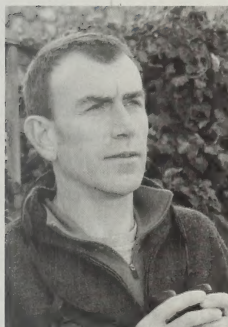
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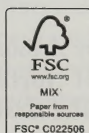
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What do *you* look for first when you open the latest rarities report? I suppose it is natural to look first at the species you've seen or found that year and see how they fit into the wider pattern, either that year or generally. If there's no personal satisfaction to be had, the easy headlines are the very rarest birds. But they are not always the ones that are remembered most vividly in later years. I always think it helps if there's a bit of a story attached to a rarity, something to add a bit of folklore. Eric Hosking photographing that Macqueen's Bustard from his Rolls in the sixties, for example. A legendary twitch helps, preferably of a top rarity that has the decency to stay around for a while, in which case the bird involved soon becomes the rarity equivalent of a national treasure and is accorded the epithet 'famous' (the famous Golden-winged Warbler and the famous Red-

breasted Nuthatch spring to mind). Looking at the birds in this latest report, which of them will have us looking back fondly in 20 years' time? The well-travelled mainland Short-toed Eagle (a third) will be right up there, whereas the second White-winged Scoter, identified after the event, and the fourth Moltoni's Warbler, identified by its DNA, will probably not. Everyone will have their own favourites, and it's part of the appeal of the report to work out your own. Fair Isle's returning Swinhoe's Storm-petrel was undoubtedly a candidate for 'story of the year' in 2014, and so was the *Pterodroma* that made its way past so many headlands along the east coast on 21st September. What a record! Tracked all the way from Flamborough at eight in the morning to Holy Island at six in the evening. In many ways, it was a nice mix of the old and new of birding. I had no photographs but a great selection of sketches to choose from for this report – just like the old days. Except that in the old days, before mobiles and social media, there would have been little chance of it being tracked so well between all those seawatching points. What a thrill though, to anticipate and then actually see a bird like that go past your own patch of seawatching territory! Fabulous.

Roger Riddington



British Birds aims to: ❖ provide an up-to-date magazine for everyone interested in the birds of the Western Palearctic; ❖ publish a range of material on behaviour, conservation, distribution, ecology, identification, movements, status and taxonomy as well as the latest ornithological news and book reviews; ❖ maintain its position as the journal of record; and
❖ interpret scientific research on birds in an easily accessible way.

Field guides: past, present and future

Field guides are an essential identification tool for birders. Here, Nigel Redman reflects on the history and development of the genre, and examines how field guides can continue to serve birders in the future.

'No birder carries a field guide... because you don't need one, because you know what you are looking at, and, anyway, even if you don't – it's cheating. You are supposed to take notes and look it up later.'

This was the advice given in Bill Oddie's *Little Black Bird Book* in 1980 to anyone who aspired to be a serious birder (as opposed to a 'dude'). It's true that most birders probably don't need to carry a field guide with them on their home patch, but all will own at least one (and probably many), and most will almost certainly need to carry one when birding abroad. To be fair, Bill Oddie does go on to praise the merits of field guides later on in the book. A field guide is, after all, an essential piece of kit for all birders at some stage in their birding careers: how else can you identify an unfamiliar bird in the field? It's easy to be complacent about them now, especially as there are field guides for every part of the world, however remote. Most are very good, a few are poor, and some are outstanding. And the standard is generally getting better and better. But it was not always like that.

The 'official' history of field guides is only 80 years old. In 1934, Roger Tory Peterson published his groundbreaking *A Field Guide to the Birds*, which covered the birds of eastern North America, although the title did not make that clear. This is considered to be the first real field guide. It was revolutionary in its aims and layout. The birds were painted in similar poses and all facing the same way, for comparison purposes. Little pointers highlighted key features. The succinct text stripped away any unnecessary information. This was a portable guide to carry with you that would genuinely help you to identify the birds that you saw. Before this, bird books tended to be big, heavy, expensive and

verbose – definitely not for carrying in the field. It didn't matter that some of Peterson's plates were in black and white (colour printing was expensive then, and presumably it seemed superfluous to print in colour birds that are essentially black and white in coloration). Perhaps more surprisingly, duller female plumages were often painted partially hidden behind the more attractive male. As we all know, it's usually much easier to identify a male, but it's also relevant that field identification of females and immatures was in its infancy then. Peterson and others continued to hide females behind males for decades after this, and it was not until the 1970s that these often crucial and more challenging plumages began to come out into the open in field guides.

The first printing of Peterson's guide sold out in a week, and it has never been out of print since. Newer editions are vastly superior to the original, with repainted plates in full colour, changes in layout and even a larger format in the most recent edition. But the genre was slow to develop. Peterson followed the Eastern guide with a Western guide (1941), and then one for Britain and Europe in 1954 (in collaboration with Guy Mountfort and P. A. D. Hollom). Two years earlier, Fitter and Richardson had produced what was probably the first serious field guide for Britain and Europe, but their guide was arranged by habitat rather than taxonomically and, although well received, it ultimately failed to match the success of Peterson's guide.

In the original Peterson the plates were scattered throughout the text. With regular use, you just about got used to finding them, but it was not ideal. Later editions placed all the plates together in a block in the middle. There was no doubt that this made it easier to find the illustrations, but you still had to go to a different part of the book to read the accompanying text.

The 'Golden Guide', illustrated by Arthur Singer and covering the whole of North America (1966), was probably the first

serious field guide to adopt the 'plates opposite text and maps' approach to its layout. Here was a comprehensive guide that had all the relevant information on a double-page spread: text and maps on the left (sometimes with key ID features highlighted) and illustrations on the right, with varying degrees of labelling on the plates or with little bits of text strategically positioned around the illustration. Of course this model necessitated compromise; the text needed to be succinct and the maps had to be small – the size of a small postage stamp. The more species that were crammed onto the page, the less information on each one and the smaller the map. But if the number of species per page was restricted to around 4–5, a useful balance could be maintained. This layout gave the Golden Guide something of an edge over Peterson, and proved to be extremely popular on both sides of the Atlantic – the Peterson guide adopted the 'plates opposite text' layout only in 1980. But both books faced a serious competitor in 1983 when the National Geographic guide first appeared. The latter went on to become the field guide of choice for a great many birders in North America, and it's still in print today in a much revised and improved edition.

In 1971 Bertel Bruun and Arthur Singer followed up their successful Golden Guide with a European version, which became known as the 'Hamlyn Guide' – again named after the publishers rather than the authors. The following year, renowned natural history publishers, Collins, came up with a competitor that covered not just Europe, but also North Africa and the Middle East. This guide, popularly known as 'Heinzl, Fitter, Parslow' (after its authors for a change) allegedly went on to sell over a million copies, remaining in print well into the modern era of field guides. Both of these had plates opposite text and maps.

In North America, Peterson's publishers Houghton Mifflin had embarked on a massive series of field guides covering the full range of natural history subjects, and using Peterson's name for the whole series: Peterson Field Guides. In Britain, Collins performed a similar role, predictably calling their series the Collins Field Guides. Other publishers dabbled in the genre, with varying

degrees of success, but none of them posed a serious challenge to the Peterson/Collins field-guide domination until a new young publishing company called Croom Helm (later becoming Christopher Helm) came along with a range of new ID guides that took bird books to new levels. By the turn of the century, Helm Field Guides had become established as the new gold standard, making the smaller-format Peterson and Collins series look somewhat outdated. Helm Field Guides combined all the best features of layout and design to generate comprehensive and authoritative guides with plates opposite text and maps, creating a series of bird field guides that would eventually cover virtually every part of the world.

I may be biased, but many of the Collins field guides, even some of the more recent ones, have a distinct retro feel to them. It may be the small format, the crowded plates or the maps all together at the end, but they are not as user-friendly as the fresher-looking Helm Field Guides. With one notable exception: *Collins Bird Guide*. This superb guide, whose origins lie with the Swedish publisher Bonniers, was first published in 1999 and has been hailed by many as the best field guide ever (for any country or region in the world). More than a decade later, its second edition can still lay claim to this accolade. The North American equivalent of the *Collins Bird Guide* came in 2000 with the publication of *The Sibley Guide to Birds* (published as the *North American Bird Guide* in Britain). With its larger format and artwork by the author David Sibley, this guide went on to sell more than 1.5 million copies in its first edition.

The Spanish publisher Lynx Edicions, who produced the acclaimed *Handbook of the Birds of the World* in 17 volumes, has been slow to enter the field-guide market. In theory they should be able to publish field guides for every country or region in the world using their archive of illustrations of every bird species, although they would need to overcome the lack of certain plumages and races. This also raises the possibility of producing bespoke field guides, covering precisely the region that you are visiting on a birding trip, without any of the confusing species that you don't stand a chance of seeing. These could be produced on a 'print

on demand' basis, as one-offs.

In this article I have deliberately focused on field guides illustrated with artwork. Photographic field guides have never been as highly regarded by birders, but this is changing with the growth of digital photography, and some photographic guides have been particularly innovative. The recent Crossley ID Guides have taken this genre to a new level, although their larger format makes them better suited to the library than the field. And a German publisher, Kosmos, has produced a guide that prints QR codes on the page. With a QR app on your smartphone or tablet, you can hold your device over the code and additional text will appear on your screen with an option to play the bird's songs and calls. Similarly, a South African publisher, Briza Publications, has produced a photographic field guide that has the codes embedded in the photos themselves, making them invisible. But for this one you need a little device in the shape of a fat ballpoint pen (called a Callfinder) which you point at the picture and then it plays the song from an MP3 player in the pen. Very clever, but you'd need to carry the book and the pen – and then make sure you don't lose the pen.

Where do we go next in the world of field guides? Many field guides are already available as e-books, viewable on smartphones and tablets, and some of these include bird sounds – which in itself is a major advance over those incomprehensible transcriptions of bird songs and calls that get printed in the 'Voice' sections of so many field guides (not to mention sonograms, which even fewer people understand, although these are rarely used in field guides). And then we have apps, which perform a similar function by also providing text, pictures, maps and sounds on your smartphone or tablet, but often with additional features such as photos, video, 'smart search' facilities to customise your search, or direct links to websites if you have access to the internet.

A question I often ask myself is what sort of field guides will birders be using in the future? How will tomorrow's birder be accessing ID information while birding in the field? In printed books or on electronic devices? Or a combination of both? Or neither? Maybe you will need only a camera,

as even a poor shot on a modern digital camera can often be zoomed in to give an image that is identifiable either in the field or back home when you have better access to the literature and the internet. Cameras are becoming today's notebooks.

Digital technology is moving ahead at a breathtaking speed. Apps already exist to enable your smartphone to listen to a piece of music and identify it for you. And it's now available for birdsong too, although memory limitations mean that you can access only a small number of species so far. This will soon change, and lazy birders will never again have to learn birdsongs; all you will need is a smartphone or even a smartwatch. And what about binoculars that can record and analyse the information they 'see' in an internal microprocessor and tell you what bird you are looking at? It sounds like science fiction, but it could become a reality. It would take a lot of the fun out of birding for sure, but if it does come about one day, it would still be good to be able to check the identification in your real or virtual library of field guides.

Nigel Redman



Nigel Redman has published dozens of Helm Field Guides over the past 20 years, and has authored one of them.

News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

Don't sack Packham!

The hunting and shooting fraternity are *very* cross that Chris Packham is speaking out against the illegal persecution of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*, legalising foxhunting and the Badger cull.

Indeed, the Countryside Alliance wants the BBC to sack him, after he wrote a column in September's *BBC Wildlife* magazine lambasting the RSPB, the National Trust, the Wildlife Trusts and the Hawk and Owl Trust for not being more outspoken. He said: 'We want more action from Britain's conservation leaders, not the fence-sitting and ineffectual risk-avoidance that have contributed to the mess we're in now.' And he accused the charities of being selective about which species they chose to protect and said they were 'hamstrung by out-dated liaisons with the "nasty brigade" and can't risk upsetting old friends' in the rural and shooting communities.

Interestingly, it's not the conservation charities calling for his

sacking but rather their 'old friends' in the Countryside Alliance who have long been gunning for Packham and sense their opportunity as the BBC sails into the sensitive political waters of Charter Renewal in 2016. For an eloquent defence of Packham see www.theguardian.com/media/2015/sep/09/bbc-chris-packham-countryside-alliance

And, as a passionate defender of wildlife, plenty of people are saying back him rather than sack him. A petition at Change.org now exceeds 75,000 signatures. Perhaps you want to sign too? www.change.org/p/bbc-don-t-sack-chris-packham



Andy Deighton

318. Chris Packham stands alongside Henry the Hen Harrier in Derbyshire, August 2015.

Three Red Kites found poisoned

Funnily enough, the illegal persecution that Chris Packham keeps banging on about, much to the annoyance of the Countryside Alliance, is still happening. The latest victims are three Red Kites *Milvus milvus* from the Gateshead reintroduction project, which has struggled to establish a viable population in Northeast England.

One was found near a grouse moor. It had died from carbofuran poisoning (a chemical banned in Britain in 2002). The two others were found together and died as a result of poisoning by aldicarb, a widely used pesticide that has been implicated in deliberate poisonings elsewhere in Britain. The bodies of all three were recovered and sent for post-mortem examination after tip-offs from the public.

The three deaths, revealed by Friends of Red Kites www.friendsofredkites.org.uk, brings the region's total number of known kite casualties from illegal poisoning to ten in recent years. FoRK

has condemned the killings but fears that the known deaths are just the tip of the iceberg and that many more dead birds are never found. It believes that persistent persecution, mainly through illegal poisoned baits, is among factors preventing the birds from spreading from their core Derwent Valley sites.

The bird killed by carbofuran was found near Edmundbyers, Co. Durham. The two others were found at High Spen, Gateshead, and included a wing-tagged female from a nearby breeding site, which had produced young for the past four years. Previous poisoning involved two kites found dead in Tynedale, Northumberland, and a breeding pair killed just across the county boundary in Co. Durham whose chicks then perished in the nest. Other local kites were found poisoned in Teesdale, Co. Durham, and Wharfedale, North Yorkshire. Another bird, which moved to Scotland, was found poisoned in the Cairngorms.

Gamekeeper fined £2,000 for 'sickening' killing of Buzzard

William Dick, a gamekeeper from the Newlands Estate, Dumfries & Galloway, was found guilty of the killing and possession of a Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* in April 2014 at Dumfries Sheriff Court in August. He was sentenced in September and fined £2,000 for these offences.

One witness described the incident as 'sickeningly violent'. Two walkers watched Dick attack the bird, after they came across him on the Estate. They saw him place a bundle wrapped in his jacket into his pick-up before driving away. The witnesses contacted the Scottish SPCA, who in turn alerted the Police. Investigators found a dead Hare, feathers and a rock with blood on it at the scene of the killing. Scottish Government scientists subsequently identified Buzzard DNA from the sample. Dick was convicted despite claiming he was on his way home from a training course, more than 150

km away, at the time of the offence.

Ian Thomson, RSPB Scotland's Head of Investigations said: 'We welcome this conviction and hope that this latest sentence shows that our courts take these outdated crimes seriously. It is unfortunate that Buzzards are regularly vilified by some sectors of the gamebird shooting industry, despite them only just recovering after decades of persecution. While scientific evidence shows they have a minimal impact on released Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus*, the cruel actions of Mr Dick are symptomatic of a continued Victorian attitude towards birds of prey, one that all-too-frequently leads to them being illegally killed.

'We commend the prompt actions of the witnesses in reporting this incident, the rapid follow-up carried out by Police Scotland and Scottish SPCA, and the work of Procurator Fiscal Kate Fleming in securing this conviction.'

Chris the Cuckoo goes missing

Chris Packham's equally famous namesake has also gone missing – but old age and the rigours of migration are the likely factors involved. The longest surviving (until now) satellite-tagged Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* in the BTO Cuckoo Project www.bto.org/science/migration/tracking-studies/cuckoo-tracking was first tagged in Norfolk in summer 2011 (when already at least a year old). He had migrated back and forth to the Congo (revealing the Cuckoo's hitherto unknown wintering grounds) four times before starting his 2015 autumn migration in early July. He made landfall in northern Italy two weeks later and then crossed the Mediterranean but has gone 'missing in action' in the Sahara.

On arrival in Italy, Chris will have faced a tough time with the region experiencing its worst drought in years. The lack of rain is likely to have limited vegetation growth and reduced the availability of caterpillars, the preferred food of Cuckoos. This is bad news for those British Cuckoos which use this

area to fatten up, providing them with the energy to make a successful crossing of the Sahara Desert. Phil Atkinson, BTO scientist on the Cuckoo Project, said: 'British Cuckoos have had a rough time this year with poor weather here in the UK and on their usual stopover sites in northern Europe. A series of poor signals from Chris's tag show that he made it to the Tibesti Mountains in northern Chad but we await further signals which will tell us whether he is still alive or not. Chris is a very special bird for us and we have our fingers crossed that his tag will transmit new information from a different location very soon.'

Chris Packham commented: 'Chris has rewarded the BTO with its highest honour – important new reliable data – and has revolutionised the way we understand migration. And, if he has fallen in action then "In some corner of a foreign desert that is for ever Cuckoo. There shall be in that gold sand a richer dust concealed." But let's hope not!'

Houbaras protected from Arab falconers

Macqueen's Bustard *Chlamydotis macqueenii*, more commonly known as Houbara, has a special place in British birding folklore. An extremely rare vagrant from Asia, the most recent individual – in November 1962 – was famously photographed by Eric Hosking in a series of iconic images as it walked down the road near Minsmere in Suffolk (plate 319). The probability of a repeat visit seems to be diminishing as the species has declined

markedly in its desert strongholds, the prime reason being rampant hunting by wealthy Arab falconers.

But now Pakistan's Supreme Court has taken a stand to protect the birds. The verdict was welcomed by WWF-Pakistan since hunting parties from Gulf countries are known to have travelled to Pakistan's southwestern Baluchistan province every winter to hunt the bustards using falcons. All

licences and permits issued by the federal government to foreign nationals and locals have apparently been cancelled. The provincial government in Baluchistan cancelled all permits last year but the federal government under Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif continued to issue licences – which have apparently now been revoked.

So this gives a glimmer of hope that another Macqueen's Bustard might yet straggle to our shores. One made it to Switzerland in October 2008 and one got even closer – to Belgium – in January 2003. That bird was taken into care and airlifted 'home' to Saudi Arabia for release. It might have preferred to take its chances in chilly northwest Europe...



Eric Hosking

319. The Suffolk Macqueen's Bustard *Chlamydotis macqueenii*, November/December 1962.

Omani Owl mystery solved

Staying in the desert, the revelation by the *Sound Approach* team in 2013 that they'd discovered a new species of owl in Oman (based on sound recordings and photographs – but no specimen) was very exciting (*Brit. Birds* 106: 648–649). They named 'their' desert owl Omani Owl *Strix omanensis*, distinct from the only previously known Middle Eastern *Strix* species – Hume's Owl *S. butleri*. However, there's now been a twist in the tale...

New research has revealed that 'Omani Owl' was in fact a rediscovered species previously known from just one old type specimen (in the Natural History Museum at Tring), said to be from Pakistan, and collected 135 years earlier. The museum specimen, of what was thought to be *S. butleri*, was re-examined by a rival group of researchers who suspected that it was in fact the same as the Omani Owl. DNA analysis revealed in their paper now shows that Omani Owl is the same as the *S. butleri* specimen. And so, Hume's Owl, familiar to many birders from trips to Israel, now has a new Latin name and a new English name: Desert Owl *S. hadorami* (named after the man who has showed many birders this species on nocturnal forays into the desert).

The new paper also examines DNA from a mystery owl discovered in Mashhad, northeastern Iran, in January 2015. Babak Musavi and Ali Khani took four feathers for DNA analysis, which the team showed were also of an Omani Owl, the first confirmation that it still exists outside the Arabian Peninsula and 1,300 km from the nearest record of this species.

When is a nature reserve not a nature reserve?

A nature reserve with a unique status could disappear off the map, thanks to a change of ownership. Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve is a 47-ha site on the Severn Estuary near Bristol, between Portishead and the mouth of the River Avon. It has breeding Barn Owls *Tyto alba*, Water Voles *Arvicola terrestris*, and this year a successful pair of Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius*.

The reserve was a product of 'planning gain'. Persimmon Homes was granted planning permission by North Somerset Council to build 2,500 houses beside Portbury Dock with permission dependent on the developers creating a nature reserve to act as a buffer between Portishead and the dock complex. Avon Wildlife Trust was chosen to manage the nature reserve with the understanding that the freehold would pass from Persimmon to AWT.

One unusual feature of this agreement – a precedent for conservation funding and future developments – was that each of the properties built would have a levy charge written into their deeds to pay for the maintenance and management of the reserve. Port Marine Management Limited was given the task of agreeing the budget for each coming year with AWT, setting the levy and collecting the money from the residents. Last year 90% of the residents paid up on first demand and almost all of the rest after one reminder.

It therefore came as rather a surprise when estate residents received a letter from the Chairman of PMML, telling them that the levy had been abolished and that North Somerset Council was taking over the freehold and future management of the reserve – without AWT being consulted. The reason given was that the levy was unsustainable as an unspecified number of residents had refused to pay. Most worryingly, if the freehold passes to NSC, there would be nothing to stop any future council from selling off the land for development or other use.

(Contributed by Giles Morris)

BB paper supports conservation in the Caribbean

The fees from writing and illustrating the latest paper in the *BB* series on Important Bird Areas (on Anguilla, in the Lesser Antilles – see *Brit. Birds* 108: 449–466) have been donated by the authors (Steve Holliday and his colleagues) to support the Dog Island IBA restoration project. Considered the ‘Galapagos of the Caribbean’, Dog Island is a

regional treasure with its biodiversity and landscapes already showing signs of improvement just three years after the rat eradication was completed. The money will support monitoring of bait stations after the rat eradication, seabird monitoring and productivity assessments of Brown *Sula leucogaster* and Masked Boobies *S. dactylatra*.

Woodcocks in the New Forest

It is now several years since the New Forest Woodcock Group (NFWG) received a grant from *BB* and in that time NFWG volunteers have been collecting a wide variety of data relating to the occurrence of Woodcocks *Scolopax rusticola* in the New Forest, Hampshire. The study aims to produce good applied science for land managers with Woodcocks in mind. Over the past three winters, more than 1,000 Woodcocks have been ringed in the New Forest and the majority have been colour-ringed too.

The New Forest is a large and unique area of woodland, heathland, short-cropped grassland, and mire, all highly suitable for Woodcocks. One question the ringing study aims to answer is whether the New Forest is a destination for migrant Woodcocks, or just a fuelling stopover before the birds head farther west to winter in Dorset, Devon or Cornwall. It has been established by other studies elsewhere that passage Woodcocks do stop en route for perhaps up to ten days before continuing. Yet from over 1,000 birds ringed during the three winters, just five have been recovered west of the New Forest: two in the Avon Valley, just west of the New Forest; one in Dorset; one in Herefordshire; and one in Portugal. The small proportion of recoveries may suggest that

the New Forest is a final destination for the majority of locally ringed birds. Ringed migrant Woodcocks heading east in March tell another story. Nine birds have been recovered in Russia, west and northwest of Moscow (a distance of more than 2,000 km). One individual was recovered nearly 5,500 km away in eastern Russia, showing that birds wintering in the New Forest may undertake a migration in excess of 10,000 km.

The ringing study is only a small part of the Woodcock Group’s overall study objectives. To date, 18 radio-tracked Woodcocks have given a wealth of locational data, which measures how they use the mosaic of different New Forest habitats. A study looking at the breeding ecology of the species is recording activity patterns of nesting females, the roding display patterns of males and, through the roding behaviour, a census of the New Forest Woodcock population.

All of the studies mentioned here, and others under the NFWG umbrella, are ongoing and the analysis of the collected data continues to progress. For more information, e-mail nfwg@newforestgateway.org

(Contributed by Manuel Hinge, NFWG Research Co-ordinator)

Birdfair 2015

‘Controversial’ Chris Packham was one of the stars of Birdfair 2015 – but once again it was Simon King www.simonkingwildlife.com who kindly gave his time to present the prizes for the *British Birds* Bird Photograph of the Year (BPY) competition, now in its 39th year. You can see all the shortlisted entries on our website at www.britishbirds.co.uk/birding-resources/bird-photograph-of-the-year We were delighted to welcome so many visitors to our stand in Marquee 3, many of whom voted for the

People’s Choice of BPY, which was won by Helen Brassington’s juvenile Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* (see plate 272 of the August issue).

And we hope you enjoyed our *Best Days with British Birds* event co-hosted with RSPB Birders on the Friday evening. Ian (DIM) Wallace was the people’s choice on the night! The Birdfair dates for your 2016 diary are August 19th–21st. See you there!

For extended versions of many of the stories featured here, and much more, visit our website www.britishbirds.co.uk

Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2014



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nature
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Nigel Hudson and the Rarities Committee

Chairman's introduction

This is the 57th annual report of the British Birds Rarities Committee, covering the year 2014. It was, overall, a below-average year for rarities, but a quick check through the report soon reveals some eye-catching records. The headline event is the inclusion, from 2012, of the Portland Pale-legged Leaf *Phylloscopus tenellipes*/Sakhalin Leaf Warbler *P. borealoides*. This is an extraordinary record, of a species pair from the Russian Far East that was not seriously considered likely to occur in Britain. The separation of these two closely related species is possible only by using vocalisations, although the record's acceptance here as an 'either/or' will be reviewed if progress is made in field identification. Also making its first appearance in this report after a green light from BOURC is 'Thayer's Gull' *Larus glaucoides thayeri*, a long overdue vagrant from the Canadian High Arctic that is already on the national lists of Denmark, Ireland, Norway and Spain.

In terms of other highlights, the rarest species in this report, those with ten or fewer records, are as follows:

- 1st Pale-legged Leaf *Phylloscopus tenellipes*/Sakhalin Leaf Warbler *P. borealoides*
- 1st & 2nd 'Thayer's Gull' *Larus glaucoides thayeri*
- 2nd White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi*
- 3rd Short-toed Eagle *Circus gallicus*, Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* and Eastern Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus*
- 4th Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* and Moltoni's Warbler *Sylvia subalpina*
- 4th & 5th Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma feae*
- 5th Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia*

- 5th & 6th 'Eastern Black Redstart' *Phoenicurus ochruros*
phoenicuroides/rufiventris/xerophilus
- 6th & 7th Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus orientalis*
- 7th Pacific Diver *Gavia pacifica*, 'Northern Harrier' *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*, Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* and Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*
- 7th & 8th American Coot *Fulica americana*
- 8th Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*
- 9th Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* and Siberian Thrush *Geokichla sibirica*
- 10th Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei*
- 10th (& 11th) Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*

A Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* in sea area Portland just sneaked into British waters, and highlighted some small discrepancies regarding the limits of British at-sea recording areas, which we shall review in more detail as a result of this bird. Two Fea's Petrels were specifically identified, equalling the numbers of Zino's *P. madeira*/Fea's Petrels this year, one of the latter being a well-watched bird that was tracked along the east coast from Flamborough Head in Yorkshire to Holy Island in Northumberland.

The hard work by the RSPB in Somerset continued to draw in the rarities, with an astonishing four territorial male Little Bitterns *Ixobrychus minutus*. The highlight of 2014 for many was the Short-toed Eagle that toured southern areas in May–July, allowing most observers several bites of the cherry, unlike Britain's second male 'Northern Harrier' *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*, which flew straight through Portland, Dorset, and was

identified retrospectively from photographs.

An influx of Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* resulted in three breeding pairs, while other wader highlights included an inland Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, two Stilt Sandpipers *Calidris himantopus*, five Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus*, two mobile Collared Pratincoles *Glareola pratincola* and a wandering Black-winged Pratincole *G. nordmanni*. Conversely, it was a poor year for other waders, including Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* and Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*. The returning Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* added itself to a further two county lists, while a twitchable American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus* tempted many to make the surprisingly long journey down the Kintyre peninsula. The only Laughing Gull *L. atricilla* of the year was on Fair Isle, yet there was an above-average showing of Franklin's Gulls *L. pipixcan*.

A remarkable double bill of Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* and Yellow-billed Cuckoo *C. americanus* involved two individuals that arrived on the same day but at opposite ends of Britain, with the much rarer Black-billed avoiding all but its original finders. A good showing of (three) Great Spotted Cuckoos *Clamator glandarius* made it five rare cuckoos in one year. It was a very poor year for Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, formerly touted as a potential colonist, with only a single record (and, unusually, from the south coast). This contrasts with the ever-increasing fortunes of Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, again putting in an above-average showing.

Those who thought it was all over by mid November were surprised and dismayed by the arrival of an all-too-brief Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* in Dorset followed by a similarly brief second bird in Sussex. Happily, a third bird, this one in Yorkshire, stayed long enough to enable a new generation of birders to enjoy this charismatic vagrant.

Also published here is a record of an Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* from Fetlar, Shetland, in September 2002. This adult male has now been accepted by BOURC as being of the nominate race *L. i. isabellinus* or 'Daurian Shrike', and thus

becomes the first accepted record of this taxon. BBRC will now be able to assign subsequent records of Isabelline Shrike to subspecies whenever possible (there are several accepted records of 'Turkestan Shrike' *L. i. phoenicuroides* since the first, at Snettisham, Norfolk, in 1995).

Four species feature in this report for the last time, as we bid a fond farewell to Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* and Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*. More details on these four species can be found in their respective species comments (and see also *Brit. Birds* 108: 287–292). It is worth repeating the criteria by which BBRC defines a national rarity. The starting point is either 100 or fewer individuals in the most recent ten-year period, or ten or fewer individuals in at least seven of the ten most recent years. Any taxon that meets, or is close to, either of these criteria, will then be *considered* for inclusion as a BBRC rarity. Removal from the BBRC list will follow similar guidelines – so those with more than 100 individuals in the last ten years, or more than ten individuals in at least seven of the last ten years, will be *considered* for removal. Before finalising any changes, particularly for taxa that are hovering close to the threshold, the Committee will also consider other factors, such as population trends, changes in distribution and identification issues; in other words, the statistical criteria should be treated as guidelines rather than hard and fast rules. We also propose that decisions about species coming on or off the list will then remain in place for at least ten years, to try and smooth out any short-term fluctuations and to avoid a situation where species 'yo-yo' on and off the list. The fortunes of the species removed will continue to be monitored, since they will appear in the Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain.

An increasing part of BBRC's work involves the consideration of rare subspecies, and a perennial problem is that we are unable to assess claims of some taxa owing to a lack of solid field criteria. A good example of this is the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor* in Scalloway, Shetland, in October 2012. Although it is a first for Scotland, in a classic location for Scandinavian

migrants and with a fine supporting cast, the lack of biometrics and DNA evidence means that confirming it as the first British record of *D. m. minor* (which breeds in Scandinavia) is not currently possible. Our ongoing review of Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans* records is also on hold, awaiting the results of molecular research. The confirmed occurrence of hybrids that closely resemble Elegant Tern has posed challenges for assessing birds observed in the field in western Europe; we feel that continuing to hold these records is currently the only safe course of action as we wait for further information and also assess the consistency of our approach to potential hybrids. By publishing records such as these in the new Appendix 4 of this report, covering records held until taxonomy or identification criteria are resolved (see p. 629), we aim to highlight gaps in knowledge and encourage new research; and we hope to revisit many of these records in the future when knowledge of identification criteria may have moved on.

The continuing reviews of Great Snipe and Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli* did at last make progress, and we are also undertaking a re-assessment of our identification criteria of autumn Pallid Swifts *Apus pallidus*.

Several high-profile records completed their journey through BBRC this year and have been passed on to BOURC for further consideration. These include three Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus michahellis atlantis*, the Essex/London Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus*, the Kent Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus* and the Kent/Essex American White Ibis *Eudocimus albus*. Further records awaiting a BOURC decision include Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii* and Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*. Yelkouan Shearwaters *Puffinus yelkouan* are currently having a stormy time, following the potential implications of a new identification paper (Gil-Velasco *et al.* 2015), and a submission from Berry Head, Devon, in 2012 remains under consideration by BOURC.

We are currently trialling a new system of feedback, by writing to the observers of some 'not proven' records to explain our decision.

If this proves workable and useful, we hope to extend this to cover all not proven records for 2015. Simply because of the time involved, it is intended to be an explanation of the decision rather than an invitation for further correspondence, particularly given that the answers to most questions can be found in our updated constitution at www.bbrc.org.uk/about/constitution. The BBRC Twitter account (@_BBRC) has proved very popular and you can follow the latest decisions as they happen as well as keeping up to date with BBRC news on our website (www.bbrc.org.uk). We are grateful to all the observers who have submitted records via the online form on our website and we encourage all observers to submit their records in this format.

Acknowledgments

BBRC continues to be supported financially by Carl Zeiss Ltd. This, along with the support of RSPB, is invaluable in enabling BBRC to function and we remain extremely grateful to both sponsors. We wish to thank all the observers and photographers who sent details of their rare-bird observations to BBRC, either directly or via County Recorders or the BirdGuides and/or Rare Bird Alert online galleries. Once again we wish to express our heartfelt thanks to county and regional recorders and their records committees for the invaluable work that they undertake in supporting BBRC. Thanks also go to all those individuals who updated information on earlier sightings, following the posting of work-in-progress files on the BBRC website throughout the year. While they may not be acknowledged in the report, their contribution remains very significant for improving the accuracy of the information provided. BirdGuides and the staff at *Birdwatch* magazine have continued to assist the Committee, particularly by enabling the submission of photographs for consideration by BBRC. We thank the following in particular for their support in various ways during the year: the Sound Approach team, Steve Dudley, Dick Forsman, Peter Kennerley, John Martin, Chris McInerney, Keith Naylor, Richard Porter and Harry Scott. John Marchant continued in his role as Archivist, Reg Thorpe as Summariser, Brian Small as Museum Consultant and James Lidster continued to broadcast our news via Twitter. We also thank the *Dutch Birding* team for providing electronic copies of papers from that journal for reference; the BTO for their continued generosity in providing space and facilities for our archive; and all the staff at the NHM, Tring, for their continued support for our work and allowing unlimited access to the specimens in the collection.

Paul French

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155–158). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled:

1. The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) dates; (5) if photographed, sound-recorded and/or DNA analysis carried out (and this evidence assessed by the Committee); (6) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; and (7) observer(s), in alphabetical order.
2. In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and ‘probables’ are not included. In cases of the very similar Eastern Bonelli’s *Phylloscopus orientalis* and Western Bonelli’s Warblers *P. bonelli*, however, we publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to Canada/Cackling Geese *Branta canadensis/hutchinsii*, frigatebirds *Fregata*, Zino’s/Fea’s Petrels *Pterodroma madeira/feae*, White-bellied/Black-bellied Storm-petrels *Fregetta grallaria/tropica*, Western/Semi-palmated Sandpipers *Calidris maurilpusilla* in non-breeding plumage, and Booted/Sykes’s Warblers *Iduna caligata/rama* (see also *Brit. Birds* 94: 395).
3. The sequence of species, English names and scientific nomenclature follow the ‘*British Birds*’ List of Birds of the Western Palearctic; see www.britishbirds.co.uk/birding-resources/the-british-birds-list/
4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species name refer specifically to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain (i) to the end of 1949 (these statistics are kindly supplied by Keith Naylor – note that they may vary slightly between reports, as his continuing research brings more accuracy to the numbers), (ii) for the period since 1950, but excluding (iii) those listed here for the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult, but a consensus view is represented by ‘probably/presumed same’ (counted as the same in the totals); records for which it is less certain whether the birds involved were the same or not are counted as different in the totals. An identical approach is applied to records of a particular species recurring at the same, or a nearby, locality after a lapse of time. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee requires firm evidence before more than one is accepted.
5. The status summary is based on the number of individuals which have occurred in the last 30 years, including the current year of the report. So for example, in the 2014 Report, the data will be based on the years 1985 to 2014 inclusive. Returning birds are excluded. The **Status** is defined as: **Extremely Rare** – total number of birds 0, 1 or 2 in the last 30 years; **Very Rare** – total number of birds 3–9 in that period; or **Rare** – total number of birds 10–35 in that period. No status is given for taxa where the total number of records is more than 35 for the most recent 30-year period. There are currently some 290–300 taxa on the British List which are currently assessed by BBRC and the spread across these categories is approximately 100 extremely rare, 80 very rare, 55 rare and 60 others. Those species for which our data are incomplete, for example when many records are still being assessed, or where historical records are still being sought, are termed **not yet determined**. Also noted are **influxes**, **returnees** (if these comprise a significant proportion of each year’s records) and instances of confirmed **breeding**. The **Trend** is based on a polynomial trend-line fitted to the ten-year moving average over the last 30 years (the 10-year average for 1985 is the mean for 1976–85, that for 1986 is the mean for 1977–86 and so on up to the current report year). Trends are not given for Extremely Rare and Very Rare taxa, simply because there are insufficient data. A trend is shown for Rare taxa, which typically occur at a rate of around one a year, but of course the data are still sparse at this level and the trend shown is at best tentative. Even for more regular rarities, short-term peaks and troughs will affect the trend statement, and readers should bear this in mind, but in most cases it is a realistic interpretation of how each species is currently faring. However, if there has been a marked change in the trend during the 30-year period concerned (for example, species that have increased noticeably), the term ‘recent’ may be used to denote the last 15 years.
6. The breeding and wintering ranges for each species are given in parentheses at the end of each species account.
7. The following abbreviations have been used in the main text of the report: BO = Bird Observatory, CP = Country Park, GP = Gravel-pit, Resr = Reservoir, SF = Sewage-farm.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

North American races, *B. c. interior/parvipes* (0, 5, 1) Not yet determined

Norfolk Holkham then Syderstone, 23rd–24th October, photo (A. I. Bloomfield, J. R. McCallum).
2013 Northumberland Low Newton-by-the-Sea, adult, 20th October, photo (R. Ahmed, J. G. Steele, G. Woodburn *et al.*).

(Canada & N USA, introduced W Europe. Race *interior* breeds NE Canada from Hudson Bay E to Baffin Island, & NW Greenland. Winters SE USA. Race *parvipes* breeds W Alaska, E to Yukon Territory. Most winter Washington & Oregon, some also NE Texas.)

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (7, 76, 1) About two per year + returnees; stable

Dorset Poole Harbour, then Stanpit Marsh, adult, 24th March to 3rd April, photo (K. E. Lane, P. Morrison, P. Rendle *et al.*); also seen Hampshire, Sussex.

Dumfries & Galloway Loaningfoot and Southerness Point, adult, 15th December 2013 to 19th March, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 583–584.

Hampshire Langstone Harbour, Fareham

Creek, Chichester Harbour and Keyhaven, adult, 27th September 2013 to 14th January, photo (see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 583–584; plate 320); also seen Dorset, Sussex.

Orkney Tormiston, Stenness, adult, 10th–24th November, photo (A. J. Leitch, M. Rendall *et al.*).

Sussex Selsey Bill, Worthing, Seaford, Birling Gap, adult, 3rd April, photo (M. R. Eade, C. Furlepa, P. D. Matson *et al.*); also seen Dorset, Hampshire.

(Breeds Taimyr Peninsula, Siberia. Migrates SW to winter coastal regions of W Black Sea in Romania & N Bulgaria. Small numbers regularly winter Netherlands, Greece & Turkey. Some may still use former wintering areas along Caspian Sea.)



Jason Crook

320. Adult Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*, with Brent Goose *B. bernicla*, Keyhaven, Hampshire, November 2013.

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* (1, 5, 1) Very rare, all modern records since 2001

Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton Lakes RSPB then Ouse Washes RSPB, male, 16th March to 3rd May, photo (D. Anderson *et al.*) (plate 321).

This stunning little duck – its scientific name *formosa* means ‘beautiful’ – was admitted to Category A of the British List as recently as 2009 (Harrop & McGowan 2009). A stable-isotope analysis of feathers from a bird shot in Essex in 1906 showed that its retained juvenile primaries and primary coverts had a very low hydrogen-isotope value, consistent with an origin in Siberia (Votier *et al.* 2009). Although there were no other acceptable records from the twentieth century, there have been six since 2001. A similar upturn in records has occurred on the Pacific seaboard of the USA, where it is also considered a rare vagrant.

All but one of the accepted records have been males, understandably so since they are that much more conspicuous than females. The one exception was a juvenile in 2010. Although males are obvious, the hybrid offspring of some mixed pairings may bear a passing resemblance to female or immature Baikal Teal.

Baikal Teals formerly wintered in huge flocks in China and Japan but the species was heavily

Steve Gantlett



321. Male Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*, Fen Drayton Lakes RSPB, Cambridgeshire, April 2014.

(Breeds E Siberia from Yenisey River E to Anadyr & Kamchatka, N to 70°N, although breeding range believed to have contracted in recent years. Most winter South Korea & lower Yangtze River, China, with small numbers regular E & S Japan.)

persecuted, leading to a rapid population decline throughout much of the twentieth century. Its main wintering area is now in South Korea where, since the early 1980s, numbers have increased from just a few thousand to over one million birds today. Whether this decline and recovery is real or the result of a shift in the wintering area is unknown, but the recent rapid population increase has coincided with a relaxation of hunting pressure. Today, huge flocks roost on a handful of reservoirs and then feed in nearby rice fields during the day.

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (0, 40, 0) Rare, about one per year; stable

Steve Gantlett



322. Adult male Black Duck *Anas rubripes*, with Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*, Strontian, Highland, March 2014.

Highland Strontian, adult male, 5th February to 25th March, photo (D. James, M. Whitelocke *et al.*) (plate 322), presumed same as Highland 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 584–585).

(Breeds E North America from Manitoba to Labrador, Canada, & S to North Carolina, USA. Most are resident or dispersive but N breeders migrate to winter coastal SE USA.)

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (10, 255, 7) About six per year; stable or decreasing

Kent Sandwich Bay BO, female, 22nd–30th April, photo (A. M. Lipczynski *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Middlemarsh Farm, Skegness, male, 29th June to 2nd July, photo (N. A. Lound *et al.*).

Northamptonshire Stanwick GP, male, 1st April, photo (S. P. Fisher per Northamptonshire Recorder).

North-east Scotland Loch of Strathbeg RSPB, male, 14th June, photo (A. Hilton, B. Sandison *et al.*).

Northumberland Castle Island, female, 6th September to 1st December, photo (D. & R. Dack *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Lound GP, Idle Valley, male, 2nd July, photo (P. Cottam, I. Cowgill).

Orkney Loch of Bosquoy, Mainland, male, 18th January, photo (A. Forsyth *et al.*); presumed

same The Shunan, Mainland, 13th April, photo (A. Forsyth).

1998 Argyll Loch Gruinart, Islay, male, 24th–25th May, previously accepted as new bird but now presumed same as Loch a'Phuill, Tiree, 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 564–566).

(Breeds from S Alaska, across much of temperate Canada to SC USA. Migratory, wintering S USA, Mexico, Caribbean & N South America.)

Redhead *Aythya americana* (0, 1, 0) Extremely rare, one record

1997 Leicestershire & Rutland Rutland Water, male, 4th–24th February, photo, previously accepted as new bird but now presumed same as Nottinghamshire 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 467, 95: 487, 96: 557, 97: 563, 98: 634, 100: 20, 104: 563).

The statistics above reaffirm that only one bird was involved in the sightings for 1996–97 (see *Brit. Birds* 108: 158–167).

(Breeds from C Alaska to S California & E to prairie provinces of W Canada & USA. Local breeder NE USA but range expanding along NE seaboard. Winters warmer regions of S USA, Mexico & Cuba.)

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 181, 8) About six per year + returnees; increasing

Avon Blagdon Lake, adult male, 29th June to 17th August, photo (N. Milbourne *et al.*), presumed same Chew Valley Lake, 19th August to 3rd September, photo (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*); also seen East Glamorgan.

Ayrshire Trabboch then Martnaham Loch, first-winter male, 15th December into 2015, photo (R. H. Hogg *et al.*).

Berkshire Wraysbury GP, adult male, 29th October to 1st November, photo (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).

Breconshire Llangorse Lake, adult male, 7th October into 2015, ringed/marked, photo (V. A. King, M. J. Waldron *et al.*).

Cheshire & Wirral Frodsham, male, 25th May to 19th June, photo (S. O'Hara *et al.*). Sandbach Flashes, male, 16th–17th June, photo (R. Jones *et al.*).

Cornwall Dozmary Pool, adult male, 29th December 2013 to 9th March (see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 586); presumed same Dozmary Pool and Colliford Lake, 27th December into 2015, photo (D. Parker *et al.*).

East Glamorgan Cardiff Bay, adult male, 23rd November 2013 to 25th January (see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 586), presumed same Cosmeston Lakes, 26th January to 16th February, and Cardiff Bay, 4th September into 2015 (per East Glamorgan Recorder); also seen Avon.

Highland Alturlie, adult female, 12th December 2013 to 5th January, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 586.

Lancashire & North Merseyside Slaidburn, adult male, 7th–8th May, photo (G. Thomas).

Nottinghamshire Holme Pierrepont, female, 23rd–24th April, photo (A. M. Clewes *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Loch an Daill, Aird Mhor, South Uist, adult female, 23rd November 2013 to 11th January, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 586.

Staffordshire Tittesworth Resr, adult male, 14th January to 27th March and 25th–26th April, photo (P. G. Barratt, A. Jackson *et al.*) (plate 323); presumed same as Greater Manchester 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 586).

Yorkshire Ingbirchworth Resr, first-winter male, 8th May, photo (M. & M. Wells *et al.*).

2012 North-east Scotland Loch of Skene, female, 6th–8th January; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 107: 586).

Since the first British record, at Chasewater, Staffordshire, from 8th March to 26th April 1987, there has been a dramatic increase in sightings in Britain: 38 in the 1990s, 111 in the 2000s (including ten or more in six years and 27 in 2007), plus a further 32 between 2010 and 2014. As a consequence, this species was removed from the list of rarities considered by BBRC with effect from 1st January 2015.

The increase in Britain and elsewhere in Europe contrasts with a decline in its native range in North America, where the combined Lesser and Greater Scaup *A. marila* population was estimated

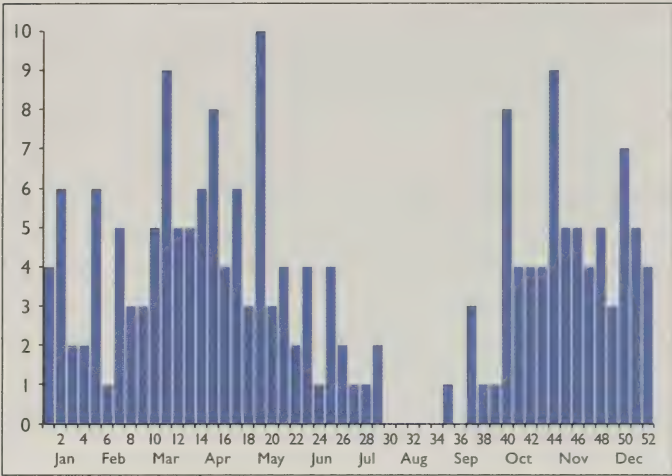


Fig. 1. Timing of discovery of Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* in Britain (all records), by week.

previous records of ‘new’ birds), Yorkshire (13), Avon (8), Nottinghamshire (8) and Lancashire & N Merseyside (7). Some other favoured counties failed to score in 2014, however, such as Perth & Kinross (13 previous records), Dumfries & Galloway (10) and Leicestershire & Rutland (8).

Fig. 1 illustrates a wide spread of discovery dates, which show slight bias towards the spring. The notable break in ‘arrivals’ between 22nd July and 31st August shows that little movement occurs during the complete post-breeding moult: in Manitoba, Canada, non-breeding and unsuccessful females begin that moult in mid July (Austin & Fredrickson 1986).

The male in Breconshire was carrying a red nasal saddle, coded ‘VH’. This was fitted when the bird was caught, as a first-winter, at São Jacinto, Aveiro, Portugal, on 20th December 2013. It remained there until 3rd February 2014, and then was found 1,325 km to the NNE, at Llangorse Lake on 7th October 2014, where it remained until 24th February 2015. The same individual was later relocated at Winterset Reservoir, Yorkshire, 225 km to the northeast, on 4th May 2015, staying until 16th May (BTO 2015). This individual shows that, as with other waterbirds, Lesser Scaup may move between sites in Britain leading to a risk of duplication in the statistics. While BBRC attempts to link records wherever possible (for example when there is some distinctive aspect of appearance), it is a moot point how many of the other ‘new’ individuals actually relate to relocations rather than new arrivals.

Much of the confusion that surrounded the identification of hybrid male *Aythya* ducks resem-

bling Lesser Scaup is no longer such an issue (Reeber 2002), although misidentification of juvenile or female Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula* that resemble Lesser Scaup has perhaps increased, and will remain a concern for county committees.

(Breeds from C Alaska through Canada to Hudson Bay & S to Washington & South Dakota. Isolated populations E of Great Lakes. Winters along both coastlines of USA, in E from New Jersey to Mexico, West Indies, C America to N Colombia.)



Richard Stanier

323. Adult male Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, Tittesworth Reservoir, Staffordshire, January 2014.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (68, 174, 2) About 4–5 per year + returnees; stable or increasing

Fife Ruddons Point, adult female, 16th–17th January, photo (M. Frosdick *et al.*), presumed same 30th November into 2015, photo (G. R. Sparshott *et al.*).

Lothian Eyebroughy to Gullane Point, first-winter female, 11th December 2013 to 16th February, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 586–587. Fidora, female, 15th December 2013 to 15th April, photo (*Brit. Birds* 107: 586–587), presumed same Musselburgh, 29th May to 8th June, photo (K. Gillon *et al.*).

Moray & Nairn Nairn and Burghead, adult male, 8th December 2013 to 12th February, photo (see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 586–587), presumed same Burghead, 26th September to 28th December, photo (M. J. H. Cook, D. K. Halpin, D. Shaw *et al.*), and Nairn, 22nd–23rd October, photo (D. M. Pullan); also seen North-east Scotland.

North-east Scotland Ythan Estuary and Blackdog, adult male, 25th April to 27th June, photo (N. Littlewood, M. Souter *et al.*), presumed same as North-east Scotland 2013 (below) and now considered same as first seen in Moray & Nairn 2009 (*Brit. Birds* 104: 564–565); also seen Moray & Nairn.

Shetland Hascosay Sound, second-winter male, 10th November 2013 to 18th February, photo (see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 586–587), presumed same Uyea Sound, 15th March to 19th April, photo (per Shetland Recorder). Bluemull Sound, first-winter female, 10th–18th February, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*); presumed same Basta Voe area, 4th September into 2015, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

2013 North-east Scotland Roseheart, St Combs and Rattray, 29th December 2012 to 25th February (M. Cowie *et al.* per North-east Scotland Recorder); also seen Moray & Nairn.

Records of King Eider often involve individuals that linger in the same area for weeks or even months, then disappear and reappear in subsequent years. This does lead to a degree of complacency in recording arrival and departure dates, but with the benefit of diligent local recorders and the birding information services, we hopefully receive enough data to build up the ‘big picture’ that could reveal movements between sites. This is exactly what has happened this year. The bird reported from Nairn and Burghead during the winter is the same individual that spends the summer on the Ythan Estuary. It then goes missing for August and September (while moulting) before returning to Moray & Nairn in October. Even with the intermittent reporting, the pattern is surprisingly accurate with between-year dates drifting by only a week or so.

More widely, we continue to review older records and bring our numbers into line with current local views (e.g. Pennington *et al.* 2004), hence some discrepancy between the current total and that given in the last report.

(Breeds Kanin Peninsula E across Arctic Siberia, including Novaya Zemlya & W Svalbard, Arctic Alaska, N Canada & N Greenland. European population winters along ice-free coasts of White Sea, N Norway & Iceland. Pacific population winters Bering Sea.)

Black Scoter *Melanitta americana* (0, 11, 2) Rare, about one every 2–3 years

Angus & Dundee Lunan Bay, adult male, 20th–31st October, photo (W. C. Aspin *et al.*).

Cleveland Redcar, adult male, 16th–18th June, photo (D. J. Britton *et al.*) (plate 324).

(Breeds Siberian tundra from Yana River E to Alaska, & N Canada E to Newfoundland. In North Atlantic, winters along coasts of E USA, N to South Carolina, & inland on Great Lakes. Elsewhere, winters ice-free seas along both coasts of N Pacific Ocean, S to N Japan & California.)



David Aitkin

324. Adult male Black Scoter *Melanitta americana* (centre), with Common Scoters *M. nigra*, Redcar, Cleveland, June 2014.



325. Adult male White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi* (second left), with Velvet Scoters *M. fusca*, Musselburgh, Lothian, December 2013.

White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi* (0, 2, 0) Extremely rare, two records, first in 2011

2013 Lothian River Esk, Musselburgh, adult male, 26th December, photo (O. & S-L. Selly) (plate 325).

In this digital age birds are increasingly being identified after the event, and while this is generally a very positive thing, it must have been somewhat galling to discover a second for Britain while scanning through your wife's photographs! A fortnight after their Boxing Day visit to Musselburgh, Owen Selly was doing just that when he noticed a bird in one image that seemed to look a lot more like a White-winged Scoter than the accompanying Velvet Scoters *M. fusca*. Unfortunately, despite much searching in the following days, it was not relocated.

Although it may be tempting to link this record with Britain's first, an immature drake found some 200 km to the north at Blackdog, North-east Scotland, in June 2011, there is no evidence to support this. Could it have gone missing for more than three years, only to make a brief appearance in Lothian? It's possible, but it seems unlikely, particularly in view of the growing number of records from northern Europe, especially Iceland (Gibbins *et al.* 2015), so it has been treated here as a new arrival.

There is an increasing groundswell of opinion that supports the view that White-winged Scoter should be split, with the North American *deglandi* and the eastern Palearctic *stejnegeri* being treated as full species. BBRC members were divided in their views as to whether the Musselburgh bird originated in the east or the west and it was thought best not to assign it to a subspecies at this time, a decision that may be reviewed in future.

(Race *deglandi* breeds NW Alaska E to Hudson Bay, & S to NE Washington & North Dakota, USA. Winters along Pacific coast from Aleutian Islands to California & Atlantic coast from Gulf of St Lawrence to South Carolina, with some remaining on Great Lakes. Race *stejnegeri* breeds NE Siberia, winters along Pacific coast of NE Asia.)

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* (1, 15, 1) Rare, about one every two years

Orkney Holm, East Mainland, adult male, 31st October to 2nd November, photo (D. Gaudie, K. E. Hague *et al.*).

The first for Orkney.

(Forested regions of North America from C Alaska throughout W & C Canada to Hudson Bay, S to Montana & NE California. Winters throughout North America, from Aleutian Islands & coastal Alaska S along both seaboard to N Mexico, with small numbers wintering inland.)

Pacific Diver *Gavia pacifica* (0, 7, 0) Very rare + returnees, all since 2007

Cornwall Marazion, adult, 22nd November into 2015 (M. Ahmad *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder), presumed same as Marazion and Mount's Bay, Cornwall 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 588).

2013 Cornwall Dodman Point and Pendower Beach, adult, 10th–27th November, photo (S. C. Votier *et al.*), previously accepted as same as Marazion and Mount's Bay, Cornwall 2013, but now considered a new bird (*Brit. Birds* 107: 588).

(Breeds NE Siberia from lower Indigirka River E to Chukotskiy Peninsula, & N North America from Alaska E to Hudson Bay & S Baffin Island. Winters North Pacific Ocean, in Asia S to Japan & E China, & North America S to Baja California & Sonora, Mexico.)

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* (1, 27, 0) Rare, about one every two years

2012 At sea Sea Area Portland, c. 50 km S of Portland Bill, subadult, 17th June, photo (J. Simmonds per G. Walbridge).

(Breeds on islands in S South Atlantic & Indian Oceans. Outside breeding season disperses N throughout southern oceans N to Tropic of Capricorn.)

Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma feae* (0, 3, 2) Very rare, all since 2001, last in 2004

Isles of Scilly At sea, S of St Agnes, 18th August, photo (R. L. Flood, J. Pender *et al.* per Isles of Scilly Recorder).

Yorkshire At sea, off Easington, 12th July, photo (P. R. French, R. Neave, G. C. Taylor).

(Breeds on Bugio, Desertas, & Cape Verde Islands.)

Zino's/Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma madeiral/feae* (0, 54, 2) About two per year; stable or increasing

Cleveland Cowbar Nab, Staithes, 21st September (M. Askew, J. Duffie, M. Rowbottom *et al.*); also seen Co. Durham, Northumberland, Yorkshire.

Co. Durham Salterfen Rocks, Sunderland, 21st September (P. Anderson), presumed same Whitburn CP, 21st September, photo (M. Harper, M. Newsome *et al.*); also seen Cleveland, Northumberland, Yorkshire. Whitburn CP, second individual, 21st September (M. Harper *et al.*). Northumberland Tynemouth, 21st September (C. Bradshaw), presumed same St Mary's Island, 21st September (A. Curry, N. P. Dales *et al.*), Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, 21st September, photo (J. Farooqi, J. Malloy, S. McElwee *et al.*); Beadnell Bay and Annstead Point, 21st September (C. G. Knox, S. Sexton, B. Whittemore, G. Woodburn), and Holy Island, 21st September (C. Barlow); also seen Cleveland, Co. Durham, Yorkshire.

Yorkshire Flamborough Head, 21st September (A. Malley, B. Richards *et al.*), presumed same

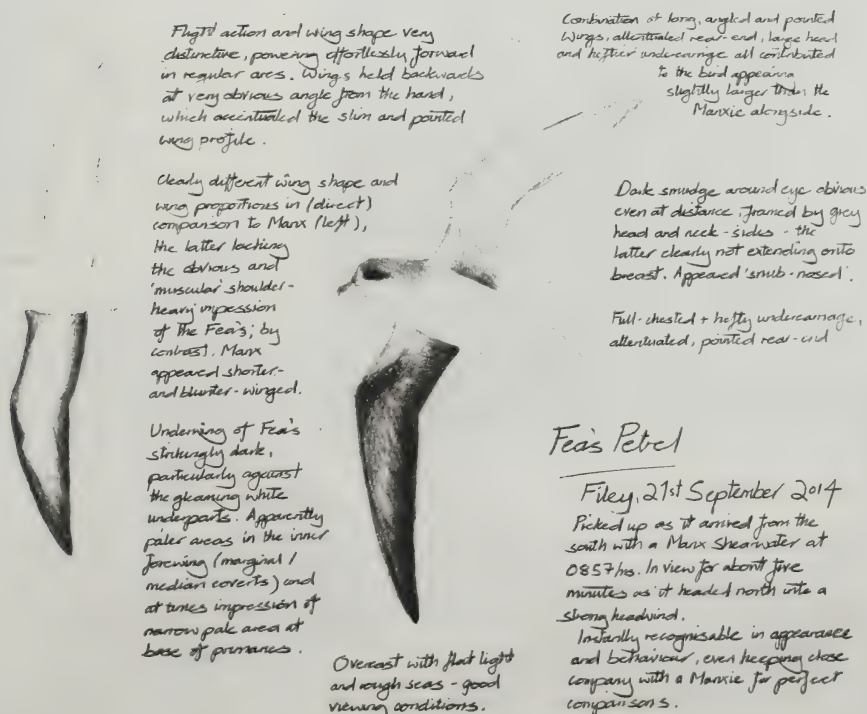


Fig. 2. Zino's/Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma madeiral/feae*, Filey, Yorkshire, September 2014.

Filey Brigg, 21st September (M. J. Pearson *et al.*) (fig. 2) and Long Nab, Burniston, 21st September, photo (N. W. Addey, M. McNaghten); also seen Cleveland, Co. Durham, Northumberland.

2013 Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, 22nd July (A. D. McLevy); presumed same Beadnell Point, 22nd July, photo (G. Woodburn) and Staple Island, Farne Islands, 22nd July (C. R. Hatsell).

The various reports of the well-watched September bird clearly show its leisurely progress north along the east coast on the 21st. It passed Flamborough at around 08.15 hrs, then Filey at 08.55, Long Nab at 09.45, Cowbar Nab at 11.25, Sunderland at 13.55, Whitburn at 14.15, Tynemouth at 15.00, Newbiggin at 15.50, Beadnell at 17.25 and finally Holy Island at 18.15, thus covering around 250 km in ten hours. There are other reports of the same bird in Northumberland, from Snab Point, Druridge Pools and the Farne Islands, but no descriptions or photographs were submitted. The second individual at Whitburn on 21st September flew past at 16.40 hrs.

(Breeding Zino's confined to C mountains of Madeira. Fea's breeds on Bugio, Desertas, & Cape Verde Islands.)

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* (0, 7, 0) Very rare, first in 1989, last in 2013

Fair Isle Havens and Skadan, adult male, 9th July to 1st August, photo (C. R. Hatsell, D. Parnaby *et al.*) (plate 326); same, Fair Isle 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 590–591).



Ciaran Hatsell

326. Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*, Fair Isle, July 2014.

So, the remarkable Swinhoe's Storm-petrel saga continues. The second of two males caught on Fair Isle in 2013 reappeared in 2014. As in 2013, this bird was repeatedly caught in mist-nets where sound recordings of European *Hydrobates pelagicus* and Leach's Storm-petrels *O. leucorhoa* were being played. The repeat captures (in both years) is somewhat at odds with the typical behaviour of non-breeding storm-petrels – during the long years prior to recruitment, immatures are typically itinerant, sometimes travelling long distances between potential breeding colonies (Bicknell *et al.* 2014). This raises some intriguing questions about the status of these birds caught on Fair Isle – questions that we are not (yet) close to answering.

(Breeds on offshore islands in NE Pacific from Peter the Great Bay nr Vladivostok, Russia, S to N Honshu, Japan, the Korean Peninsula & islands off E China. Migrant through E & S China Seas & Straits of Singapore to winter in tropical Indian Ocean.)

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (247, 249, 2) About 3–4 per year, breeding; stable

Greater Manchester Elton Resr, male, 25th–26th May, photo (B. Fielding *et al.* per Greater Manchester Recorder).

Northumberland Gosforth Park, adult male, 22nd–27th June, photo (J. Littlewood *et al.*).

Somerset Ham Wall RSPB, four, males in song, 18th May to 10th July, photo (per Somerset Recorder), presumed same as Westhay Moor and/or Ham Wall RSPB, Somerset 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 593).

2012 Cornwall Vellandreath, Sennen, female, 26th March, photo (J. Williams per D. Flumm).

(Widespread but local in Europe N to 53°N. To E, breeds to 60°N in European Russia, & E to Kazakhstan & NW China. Migratory, wintering mainly E Africa, S from Sudan & Ethiopia. Other populations largely resident or dispersive in N Indian subcontinent, sub-Saharan Africa & Australia.)

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (23, 212, 9) About seven per year; stable

Caernarfonshire Conwy, adult, 20th May (R. Sandham); also seen Denbighshire.

Denbighshire Upper Colwyn Bay, adult, 20th May, photo (H. R. A. Cook); also seen Caernarfonshire.

Devon Dawlish Warren, adult, 31st May (A. Keitley, I. Lakin, K. Rylands).

Greater Manchester Horwich, 26th May (A. Makin); also seen Lancashire & N Merseyside.

Lancashire & North Merseyside Rivington Resr, 26th May (A. Makin); also seen Greater Manchester.

Lincolnshire Crowle, first-summer, 26th May, photo (G. P. Catley); also seen Yorkshire.

Norfolk Stiffkey, Salthouse and Kelling, adult, 3rd June (R. Millington, J. Williamson *et al.*); also seen Suffolk.

Shropshire Whixall Moss, adult, 28th April (J. P. B. Grundy, M. R. Owen).

Suffolk Lowestoft, Kessingland and Covehithe, 5th June, photo (G. Hawes *et al.*); also seen Norfolk.

Trimley Marshes, juvenile, 15th–16th November, ringed, photo (P. J. Holmes, P. Oldfield, G. Parker *et al.*), presumed same Hazlewood Marshes, Aldeburgh, 17th November, photo (J. & M. Mountain).

Sussex Litlington, River Cuckmere, 27th May (R. C. Self *et al.*).

Yorkshire Winterset Resr, first-summer, 26th May, photo (G. J. Speight), presumed same Southfield Resr and Thorne Moors, 26th May, photo (C. Featherstone, T. C. Lowe, R. Sprakes *et al.*); also seen Lincolnshire. Scarborough, 10th June (A. & B. Devitt).

(Breeds C Iberia & E France through C Europe to Russia & small numbers into N Greece & Turkey. To E, breeds widely in forested temperate regions of Russia & Siberia to Russian Far East. Most are migratory, wintering Africa, S & SE Asia.)

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 42, 1) Rare, about one per year; stable

Argyll Feorlin, Minard, adult, 30th May to 6th June, photo (A. Lauder *et al.*); also seen Clyde, Outer Hebrides.

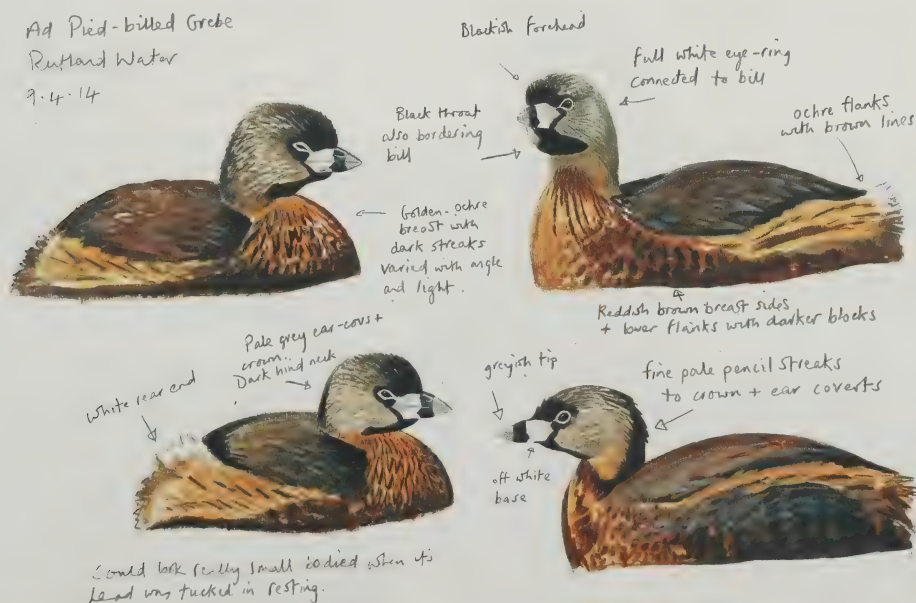


Fig. 3. Adult Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*, Rutland Water, Leicestershire & Rutland, April 2014.

Clyde Loch Thom, 20th–30th April, photo (M. Holcombe, L. McCartney *et al.*); also seen Argyll, Outer Hebrides.

Leicestershire & Rutland Rutland Water, adult, 9th–10th April, photo (S. M. Lewis, J. Wright *et al.*) (fig. 3).

Outer Hebrides Loch nam Feithean, North Uist, 6th December 2013 to 19th April, photo (see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 594); also seen Argyll, Clyde.

(Breeds throughout North America from C Canada S through USA to C America, the Caribbean & much of South America. Northern populations migratory, wintering S USA & Mexico.)

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* (0, 2, 1) Very rare, other records in 1999 and 2011

Dorset Morden Bog, Wareham Forest and Arne RSPB, first-summer, 31st May to 1st June, photo (J. Hunt, P. Morton *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 215); also seen Hampshire, Norfolk, Surrey, Sussex.

Hampshire Bishop's Dyke and Beaulieu Road Station, first-summer, 8th June, photo (S. Colenutt *et al.* per birding information services); presumed same Hatchet Pond, Beaulieu, 12th–13th June, photo (W. Percy per Hampshire Recorder), Pig Bush, 30th June to 2nd July, photo (S. Keen *et al.* per Hampshire Recorder) and Beaulieu Road Station, 5th July (W. Percy per Hampshire Recorder); also seen Dorset, Norfolk, Surrey, Sussex.

Norfolk Santon Downham, first-summer, 19th–20th July, photo (G. Chambers *et al.*); also seen Dorset, Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex.

Surrey Thursley Common, first-summer, 12th July, photo (C. Sulston, M. J. Taylor); also seen Dorset, Hampshire, Norfolk, Sussex.

Sussex Wych Cross, Ashdown Forest, first-summer, 10th June (A. D. McLevy); presumed same Gill's Lap and Wych Cross, 15th–29th June, photo (A. D. McLevy *et al.*) (plate 327), and Ashdown Forest, 12th July, photo (J. I. & P. J. McCulloch); also seen Dorset, Hampshire, Norfolk, Surrey.

Despite there having been only two previous records of this distinctive raptor, there was a deluge of sightings in 2014 and BBRC received many submissions. One problem arising from these was exactly how many individuals occurred and which records, if any, could be linked to any others

with a reasonable degree of certainty. Fortunately, some of the submissions were of a high standard, with detailed notes and good photographs. This helped us to determine that one individual, having arrived in Dorset, spent a considerable amount of time in Hampshire and Sussex, with a day trip into Surrey, before moving to Norfolk. With several news updates from Rare Bird Alert and BirdGuides each day, its progress was well monitored.

Since it was a high-profile record, we feel compelled to comment on the acceptance and data relating to the Norfolk record. For reasons unknown to the Committee, the information supplied by the finder was imprecise in terms of location,



Mike Buckland

327. First-summer Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*, Ashdown Forest, Sussex, June 2014.

while there were inconsistencies in the dates. These data would have been extremely valuable to help us build a more complete picture of this mobile individual in 2014. It is always possible for observers to submit records in strict confidence, where some sensitive details (such as the site name or observer) are not published – yet this was not the case in this instance. The unnecessary obfuscation around the Norfolk sightings placed the Committee in a very difficult position. Eventually, enquiries by the County Recorders established that the bird had been seen in the area and on the dates given above, and we decided that it was possible to accept the record based on the photos supplied, which were considered genuine. However, the original (very approximate) location and some additional dates were not possible to confirm.

(Breeds NW Africa N to N France, & E through C Europe to Estonia & S to Balkans. To E, breeds E through Turkey & Israel to Caucasus Mountains, Iran & India, also European Russia to Urals, S Siberia, C Asia, W China & N Mongolia. Winters Africa S of Sahara, Iran, India & occasionally to Indochina & Malay Peninsula.)

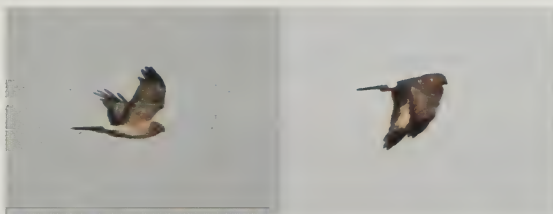
Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

North American race, 'Northern Harrier' *C. c. hudsonius* (0, 6, 1)

Very rare, all but one since 2008

Dorset Portland Bill, male, 21st April, photo (P. Moore) (plate 328).

(Race *hudsonius* breeds Alaska E to Canadian Maritime Provinces, S throughout Canada & USA from California E to Pennsylvania & Maryland, & S to Baja California, Mexico. Northern populations migratory, wintering from USA S throughout C America to N Colombia.)



Peter Moore

328. Male 'Northern Harrier' *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*, Portland Bill, Dorset, April 2014.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (2, 66, 8) About 2–3 per year, influx 2011 (29); recent increase

Fair Isle Da Water, then other sites, juvenile female, 8th–17th September, photo (R. Cope, C. Round, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, juvenile female, 19th September, photo (J. R. McCallum *et al.*).

Shetland Ham, Foula, juvenile, 31st August, photo (D. & G. Atherton). Loch Croft, Foula, juvenile, 17th–18th September, photo (D. & G. Atherton). Hillwell, Spiggie and Exnaboe, Mainland, juvenile, 17th–21st September, photo (R. Ashbee, D. J. Britton *et al.* per Shetland Recorder) (plate 329). Tingwall, Mainland, juvenile, 1st–5th October, photo (N. W. Addey, C. M. & M. McNaghten, S. Wignill *et al.*).



Rebecca Nason

329. Juvenile Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*, Loch of Hillwell, Shetland, September 2014.

Somerset Steart Marshes, juvenile female, 22nd October to 7th November, photo (J. R. Best, J. A. Hazell, T. McGrath, R. L. Musgrove *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere RSPB and Sizewell, juvenile, 21st September, photo (J. H. Grant, R. Walden *et al.*).

2012 Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, juvenile, 8th May (K. M. Wilson *et al.*).

Although the majority of Pallid Harriers winter in Africa south of the Sahara or in southern Asia, a few do remain in North Africa and the Middle East. Occasionally, birds also overwinter in Europe and even Britain: a juvenile lingered in Norfolk from 24th December 2002 until 30th March 2003 (*Brit. Birds* 96: 560, 97: 573), and another remained in Cornwall from 4th December 2009 to 25th January 2010 (*Brit. Birds* 104: 575). Interestingly, a juvenile female that wintered in France (in Charente-Maritime and Vendée, from 27th November 2014 until 7th March 2015) was sufficiently well photographed to be identified as the same individual that had been well watched at Steart, Somerset (600 km to the north), until 7th November 2014. It seems that Pallid Harriers are well able to survive in winter in the absence of locusts, their prime winter prey.

(Breeds from Ukraine E through Russia to c. 100°E, & S to Kazakhstan & NW China. Occasionally breeds Finland. Migratory, wintering throughout much of E & C Africa, & Indian subcontinent.)

Sora *Porzana carolina* (5, 13, 0) Very rare, last in 2013 (two)

Isles of Scilly Lower Moors, St Mary's, 2nd–3rd February, photo (E. A. Fisher *et al.*), presumed same 3rd–10th April, photo (E. A. Fisher *et al.*); presumed same as Lower Moors, Isles of Scilly 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 595).

With Scilly accounting for seven of the 13 post-1950 UK records of Sora, another from that archipelago is not too surprising. The 2014 records are presumed to relate to the individual discovered in October 2013; it appears to have wintered undetected on the islands until being forced into the open by rising water levels in Lower Moors in early February. It promptly disappeared for a month, only to reappear in April. Midwinter and early spring records of Sora are not unprecedented, with records from Lincolnshire (March 2006), Nottinghamshire (December 2004 to January 2005), Devon (January to April 2000) and Meirionnydd (January 1932). Long stays on Scilly by wintering North American vagrants are not without precedent either; the 174-day stint at Lower Moors by this Sora was bettered by the Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis* that spent 214 days in almost exactly the same spot in 2011/12!

(Breeds North America from C Canada S to C California & Maryland, USA. Migrates to winter from S USA to C America & N South America.)

Little Crake *Porzana parva* (62, 38, 2) Rare, about one every two years

Devon Black Hole Marsh, Axe Estuary, juvenile/first-winter, 5th–6th September, photo (I. McLean, S. Smith, S. Waite *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere RSPB, juvenile/first-winter, 30th September to 13th October, photo (R. C. Knight *et al.*).

(Breeds across temperate steppe region from Austria E through Ukraine & European Russia to W Siberia, C Kazakhstan & NW China. Small numbers occasionally breed to N & W, reaching Netherlands, Finland & Spain. Most winter NE & E Africa, although some W to Senegal.)

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* (63, 23, 1) Rare, about one every 1–2 years, bred in 2012

Kent Oare Marshes, male in song, 22nd–23rd May, sound recording, photo (M. E. Wright *et al.*).

(Locally common breeder from Spain E through Mediterranean Basin to Ukraine, occasionally N to Netherlands. To E breeds warm temperate Asia E to Japan. European breeders migrate throughout S Europe to winter sub-Saharan Africa. Elsewhere, winters Indian subcontinent & SE Asia to Singapore. Other races breed Australasia & southern Africa.)

American Coot *Fulica americana* (0, 6, 2) *Very rare, first in 1996, last in 2005*

Highland Loch Flemington, first-winter, 4th January to 14th April, photo (S. Eaves *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 61; plate 330); also seen Moray & Nairn.

Moray & Nairn Loch Flemington, first-winter, 18th March to 18th April (A. D. & D. Macaskill); also seen Highland.

Outer Hebrides Loch nam Feithean, Balranald RSPB, North Uist, 16th November into 2015, photo (J. Boyle, B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

Although the first two British records of American Coot were in England (Kent 1996 & Cumbria 1999), all six subsequent records have been in Scotland. In North America, American Coots are among the first birds to return to their breeding lakes once the ice has melted, and even northern breeders may be back on territory in April. The month of April features heavily in movements of the British records too, with two of the eight having arrived and six departed during that month. Are we missing overwintering birds, or catching some that have wintered farther south and are heading north again? It would seem likely that some British records involve birds that have made landfall elsewhere in Europe in the previous autumn – over 25 have been recorded in the Azores and others on mainland Europe.

(Breeds temperate S Canada & USA, from Vancouver Island E to New Brunswick, & S throughout much of USA, Mexico, the West Indies & C America, with isolated populations in N & C Andes. Northern populations migratory, wintering S USA, occasionally N to S Ontario, Canada.)



Ian Fisher

330. First-winter American Coot *Fulica americana*, Loch Flemington, Highland, January 2014.

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* (190, 24, 3) *Rare, about one every 2–3 years*

Dorset West Bexington, 18th November, photo (A. J. Barrett, M. J. Morse).

Sussex East Guldeford, 30th December, photo (A. Parker).

Yorkshire Fraisthorpe, 31st December into 2015, photo (per birding information services) (plate 331).

These are the first records since 2002, and the observers of the first two will have been widely envied. But the welcome discovery of the Yorkshire bird in the afternoon of the last day of the year changed all of that. Fortunately, it lingered until New Year's Day 2015 and continued to perform throughout the day. The finder of the Sussex individual is perhaps the only observer to have been fortunate enough to have discovered two vagrant bustard species in Britain, having found a Great Bustard *Otis tarda* in Kent in December 1981.

Records of Little Bustard are strongly skewed towards southern England. The southwest, southeast and East Anglia account for two-thirds of all sightings, although the geographical



331. Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*, Fraisthorpe, Yorkshire, December 2014.

spread stretches from Scilly right up to Shetland. Almost 80% have turned up between October and January, with December being the peak month.

Little Bustard populations have declined significantly throughout the species' range from western Europe to central Asia, with changes in agricultural practices being the key factor responsible for the decline (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/wildbirds/action_plans/docs/tetrax_tetrax.pdf). The migratory population in western France declined from 6,200 to 400 displaying males between 1980 and 2004 (Villers *et al.* 2010). This is believed to have been the source of some of our vagrants. Others may originate from farther east. The populations from central and eastern Europe to central Asia, formerly separated as a distinct race *T. t. orientalis*, are also migratory or dispersive and were believed to represent the majority of pre-1950 records (Witherby *et al.* 1948). Conservation initiatives in France, including agri-environmental schemes and releases of captive-bred birds, appear at least to have stabilised numbers, and there is evidence of some localised increases. Perhaps the mini-influx of 2014 was related to this improvement in fortunes.

(Locally numerous on steppe grasslands of Iberian Peninsula with smaller populations S & C France, Italy, Sardinia & Ukraine. French populations migratory, wintering S France & Iberia, but Iberian breeders largely resident or disperse locally. To E, breeds widely S Russia to E Kazakhstan & winters SW Caspian Sea.)

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (121, 313, 24) *About nine per year, influxes 1987 (33), 2012 (31), occasional breeding; stable*

Cambridgeshire Little Paxton GP, two (pair), 16th May, photo (M. R. Davis); presumed same Fen Drayton GP, then Berry Fen, 18th–23rd May, photo (D. Anderson *et al.* per Cambridgeshire Recorder). Burwell Fen, two (pair), 17th May, photo (A. Long *et al.* per Cambridgeshire Recorder); also seen Northamptonshire, Sussex/Kent.

Dorset Bestwall Marshes, Wareham, two (pair), 12th–13th April, photo (P. Morton *et al.*); also seen Essex. Chard Junction GP, adult male, 4th May, photo (R. Harris, D. W. Helliard), presumed same Lodmoor RSPB, 5th May, photo (D. Croxson *et al.* per Dorset Recorder); also seen Hampshire, Kent, Sussex. Lytchett Bay, three (male and two females), 21st–25th May, photo (I. D. Ballam *et al.*).

Essex Bowers Marsh RSPB, two (adult male, female), 11th April, photo (per Essex Recorder), presumed same Old Hall Marshes RSPB, 14th–17th April, photo (C. Mackenzie-Grieve *et al.*); also seen Dorset.

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, adult male, 6th May, photo (A. Robjohns *et al.*); also seen Dorset, Kent, Sussex.

Isle of Wight Brading Marsh, ten, 12th April, photo (B. & S. Penman *et al.* per Isle of Wight Recorder); presumed same as Dungeness, Kent.

Kent Dungeness RSPB, ten, 24th April, one 25th, two 26th–27th, one 28th April to 14th May, photo (D. & W. Stewart *et al.*); the others presumably dispersed to other counties, see notes below. Sandwich Bay BO, adult male, 2nd May, photo (A. Faiers, I. Hodgson, A. M. Lipczynski); also seen Dorset, Hampshire, Sussex. Cliffe Pools RSPB, two (pair and four young that did not fledge), 15th May to 17th June, photo (M. J. Puxley *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 255). Elmley RSPB, two adults, 16th May, photo (A. Mckee).

Northamptonshire Summer Leys, Wollaston, two (pair), 18th May, photo (S. Murfitt, J. E. & R. Ward *et al.* per Northamptonshire Recorder); also seen Cambridgeshire, Sussex/Kent.

Somerset Meare Heath, female, 17th–25th May, photo (G. M. Dicker, N. A. Smith *et al.*).

Suffolk Cavenham Heath, six (pair and four young), 19th–30th July, photo (D. Langlois, E. Lucking *et al.*); presumed same Livermere Lake, six on 29th July decreasing to one on 3rd August, photo (P. M. Wilson *et al.*); then one, presumed same, Cavenham Heath, 6th–12th August, photo (per birding information services).

Sussex Medmerry RSPB, adult male, 29th April (also seen Dorset, Hampshire, Kent), presumed same 17th May to 10th August; female, 17th May to 30th July; and three young raised by this pair, photo (C. R. Janman, P. Stent *et al.*) (plate 332). This family party of five seen at Sidlesham Ferry, Pagham, 31st July to 3rd August, and 11th August, photo (A. House, A. R. Kitson, I. Lang *et al.* per Sussex Recorder); and Pulborough Brooks RSPB, 4th–10th August, photo (J. Winder *et al.* per Sussex Recorder). Barnham Brooks, 6th–8th June, photo (A. R. Kitson).

Sussex/Kent Scotney Court GP, two, pair, 14th May, photo (A. Parker); also seen Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire.

2013 Essex Limbourne Creek, 6th May, photo (per birding information services).

2012 Isle of May Horse Hole then High Tarn, adult male, 30th April to 4th May, photo (M. Harris, M. Newell *et al.*).

When Black-winged Stilts reach Britain they are prone to wander widely in search of a mate or a suitable nest site. They frequently travel considerable distances between sites, and are quite capable of long flights overnight, making it difficult to track their movements; and they can return to the same locations they visited earlier! Some individuals possess a unique pattern of black-and-white feathering on the head and neck which enables them to be identified individually and tracked, which led to some unexpected outcomes in terms of which bird went where and when in 2014.

So how many birds arrived in 2014? The two early birds in Essex, on 11th April, were followed next day by a flock of ten on the Isle of Wight, which we presume were next seen almost two weeks



Mick Davis

332. Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Medmerry RSPB reserve, Sussex, June 2014. One member of the pair that successfully reared three young at this site in 2014.

later at Dungeness, in Kent. Perhaps they had been on the Continent in the meantime, although it is also possible that the Dungeness birds were unrelated new arrivals. The ten at Dungeness dispersed, and we have presumed that they accounted for many of the subsequent records (two in Sussex, two in Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, two in Kent, two more in Cambridgeshire and two in Suffolk) – although tracking them with any degree of certainty was challenging. A male with distinctive head markings at Medmerry, Sussex, on 29th April, was then seen at Sandwich (Kent) on 2nd May, Chard Junction on 4th and Lodmoor (both Dorset) on 5th, Titchfield (Hampshire) on 6th before returning to Medmerry on 17th – together with a female – to begin raising a brood! Plumage was again used to track two birds seen on the Kent/Sussex border on 14th May to Cambridgeshire on 17th and then Northamptonshire from 18th onwards. Added to the 12 birds mentioned so far there were five lone birds, giving us a minimum of 17 arrivals. With seven fledged juveniles added to the adults, we reach a conservative and very approximate total of 24 for the year. If anyone has photographs that can help us improve this estimate, we would be very happy to receive them. We have excluded from this total a colour-ringed bird seen in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, which is believed to have escaped from a collection.

Records of Black-winged Stilt are increasing in Britain and with 2015 being another ‘bumper year’, including another breeding attempt, it is quite possible that this species’ days as a *BB* rarity are numbered.

(Breeds along Atlantic coast of France & locally throughout Mediterranean basin to Black Sea. To E, breeds from S Siberia & C Asia to NW China & S to Hong Kong. Most European birds winter sub-Saharan Africa &, increasingly, in SW Iberia. Asian breeders winter S & SE Asia & S China.)

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (2, 84, 2) About three per year; stable

Orkney Holland House, North Ronaldsay, adult, 23rd July to 11th August, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).

Staffordshire Middleton Lakes RSPB, adult, 26th July to 2nd August, photo (G. Williams *et al.*) (plate 333).

2013 Suffolk Orfordness, 29th June to 3rd July, photo (D. Fairhurst, M. C. Marsh, G. Stannard *et al.*).

2002 Lincolnshire Horseshoe Point, North Cotes, two adults, 17th–18th July, one to 19th July, photo (D. Bradbeer, I. Shepherd *et al.* per G. P. Catley).

The 2002 Lincolnshire record is the first instance of two together in Britain.

(Breeds across Siberian tundra from Yamal Peninsula E to Chukotskiy Peninsula, including New Siberian islands, & W Alaska. Winters Indian subcontinent, S China & S Japan, S through SE Asia to Australia, New Zealand & islands in C Pacific, small numbers regular Kenya & Persian Gulf.)



Dave Hutton

333. Adult Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Middleton Lakes RSPB, Staffordshire, August 2014.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* (0, 3, 1) Very rare, others in 1989, 1996, 2004
Norfolk Breydon Water RSPB, adult, 13th–15th July, photo (P. R. Allard *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 274; fig. 4).

Discovering a vagrant Great Knot remains one of the ultimate prizes for the dedicated wader fanatic, and this year's bird was found by one of Britain's most dedicated patchworkers – even if it did lead to him missing most of the World Cup Final! The bird stayed for three days, so attracted several hundred admirers and it was a welcome British tick for many. Not only was this just the fourth for Britain, but none of the previous sightings had been easy: the first for Britain was a one-day bird in Shetland on 15th September 1989; the second hung around for over three weeks in Cleveland in October–November 1996 but was usually seen at distance (hence the 'great dot' nickname); and the most recent bird was not only a decade ago but was seen on just three days over a period of almost three weeks in Lancashire & N Merseyside in July–August 2004.



Fig. 4. Adult Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, Breydon Water RSPB reserve, Norfolk, July 2014.

The four British sightings span almost the whole autumn period, with birds being present in every month from July to November, although this year's bird was the earliest by over two weeks. The first for the Western Palearctic was, however, a spring bird at the Ebro Delta in Spain on 7th April 1979. All four British records have involved adults, which may suggest that juveniles and first-winters are being overlooked. Almost all the British records of other Siberian shorebirds, including Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *C. acuminata* and Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis*, have also involved adults, and this adult bias remains unexplained. In contrast to these two species, which also winter in southeast Asia and Australia, some Great Knots also migrate southwest, where small numbers winter on the coasts of the Persian Gulf, Pakistan, northern Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Elsewhere in 2014, a first-winter Great Knot was found in a flock of Red Knots *C. canutus* on 8th November at the Oued Sous in Morocco (<http://moroccanbirds.blogspot.com/2014/11/calidris-tenuirostris-oued-souss.html>).

(Breeds mountains of NE Siberia. Migrates throughout coastal E Asia with most wintering coastal Australia, but some from Persian Gulf E to SE Asia.)

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* (15, 229, 4) About five per year; stable

Lincolnshire Alkborough Flats, 16th May, photo (N. Drinkall, C. & W. Gillatt). Gibraltar Point, adult, 29th July, photo (J. P. Shaughnessy *et al.*).

Northumberland Holy Island, 30th May, photo (G. Bowman).

Yorkshire Nosterfield, 25th–26th May, photo (R. M. Ward *et al.* per Yorkshire Recorder).

(Nominate race breeds N Norway, Sweden & Finland, & Arctic Russia where distribution uncertain. Migrates through E Mediterranean, Black & Caspian Seas to winter Persian Gulf & W India to Sri Lanka, with small numbers coastal E Africa. E race *sibirica* breeds from Taimyr Peninsula E to Kolyma River delta, & winters from Bay of Bengal through coastal SE Asia to Australia.)

Michael Eccles



334. Adult Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*, Druridge Pools, Northumberland, August 2014.

Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus* (0, 31, 2) *Rare, about one every 1–2 years*
 Norfolk Hickling Broad, adult, 11th–12th July, photo (T. E. Allwood, A. J. Kane *et al.*).
 Northumberland Cresswell Pond and Druridge Pools, adult, 29th July to 14th August, photo (S. Rippon *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 275; plate 334).

(Breeds North America from NE Alaska to Hudson Bay, Canada. Migrates through interior & E USA to winter C South America from E Bolivia & S Brazil to NE Argentina. Occasionally winters N to Mexico, Caribbean & S USA.)

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (0, 136, 1) *About four per year; stable or increasing*

Outer Hebrides Rubha Ardvule, South Uist, adult, 24th May, photo (G. C. Waddington).

(Breeds on tundra of W Alaska, E across Arctic Canada to S Baffin Island & coastal Labrador. Has bred extreme NE Siberia. Migrates across Great Plains & E seaboard of USA to winter C America & coasts of tropical South America to Brazil & Peru.)

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (0, 76, 5) *About two per year; stable or decreasing*

Cornwall Walmsley Sanctuary, 15th–16th May, photo (P. Maker *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder).
 Kent Swalecliffe, 16th August, photo (G. Burton).

Graham Catley



335. Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, Covenham Reservoir, Lincolnshire, May 2014.

Lincolnshire Covenham Resr, 19th–20th May, photo (G. P. Langan *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 216; plate 335). Far Ings, Barton-on-Humber, 12th August, photo (R. Dawkins, M. West).

Yorkshire Beacon Ponds, Easington, adult, 7th August, photo (J. M. Turton *et al.*).

(European range restricted to small population in N Gulf of Bothnia, Finland, & Belarus. To E, breeds widely throughout N Russia to E Siberia. Winters along coasts of S & E Africa to Persian Gulf, Indian subcontinent, SE Asia & Australasia.)

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* (1, 186, 7) About 4–5 per year; stable or increasing

Clyde Baron's Haugh RSPB, adult, 6th–13th July, photo (D. Abraham *et al.*).

North-east Scotland Inverallochy, juvenile, 12th October into 2015, photo (P. A. A. Baxter, M. B. Cowie *et al.*).

Orkney The Pier, North Ronaldsay, 2nd May, photo (G. A. D. Woodbridge *et al.*).

Oxfordshire Farmoor Resr, 7th–12th May, photo (D. John *et al.* per Oxfordshire Recorder).

Shetland Skaw, Unst, 15th–16th May, photo (R. J. Brookes, M. G. Pennington) (plate 336).

Warwickshire Draycote Water, 7th May, photo (R. S. Hazell).

Yorkshire Potteric Carr, 18th May, photo (A. Andruchiw, R. J. Scott *et al.*).

(Breeds North America from W Alaska to Newfoundland & S to California, Texas & North Carolina. Some winter coastal USA to S of breeding range but most winter C America, Caribbean & N South America, S to N Argentina & Chile.)



Rob Brookes

336. Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*, Skaw, Unst, Shetland, May 2014.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (19, 328, 11) About seven per year; stable or increasing

Buckinghamshire College Lake, adult, 5th May, photo (F. C. Buckle, O. Hegarty, T. J. Lewis).

Cornwall Windmill Farm, Ruan Major, adult, 10th–14th May, photo (A. Blunden, D. Wright *et al.*).

Croft Pascoe, juvenile, 29th August to 4th September, photo (D. Wood *et al.*). Copperhouse Creek, Hayle Estuary, juvenile/first-winter, 21st October to 2nd December, photo (P. J. Smale *et al.*).

Dorset Brownsea Lagoon, 8th December, photo (G. J. Armstrong *et al.*).

Hampshire Stansore Point, Lepe CP, first-winter, 10th November 2013 to 1st April, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 601–602. Normandy Marsh, juvenile, 5th–9th September, photo (J. R. Jones *et al.*), presumed same Titchfield Haven, 11th–29th September, photo (per birding information services).

Kent Higham Bight and Higham Marshes, adult, 18th October 2013 to 6th March; see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 601–602.

Lincolnshire Frampton Marsh RSPB, adult, 11th–26th July, photo (T. Collett *et al.*).

Northumberland Beadnell Flash, adult, 8th–10th May, photo (G. Woodburn *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Loch Fada, Benbecula, adult, 11th May, photo (S. E. Duffield *et al.*), presumed same Daliburgh, South Uist, 17th May, photo (I. R. Thompson *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, juvenile, 11th–12th September, photo (L. P. Langley, J. Moss), presumed same Marloes Mere, 15th–17th September, photo (B. Southern *et al.*).

Sussex Pett Level, first-winter, 25th December into 2015, photo (G. Spinks *et al.*).

Lesser Yellowlegs remains one of our most frequently occurring vagrants, and has featured in every BBRC report since 1965. Annual totals since 2000 are generally higher than those between

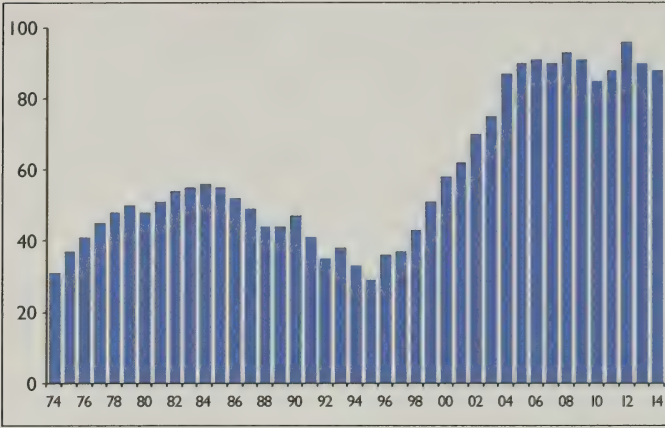


Fig. 5. Ten-year rolling totals for records of Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* in Britain, 1974–2014 (the bar for 1974 shows the total number of records during 1965–74, etc.).

in North America to estimate the population at c. 400,000 individuals; they suggested that the species had undergone a statistically significant decline over the previous 40 years, which led the US Fish & Wildlife Service to add it to the List of Birds of Conservation Concern 2008 as a species of ‘National Concern’. The population figure was revised upwards to 660,000 by Andres *et al.* (2012), yet this represented a further 20% decline after the 2006 estimate was also revised.

Hunting pressure on the wintering grounds in some parts of the Caribbean and South American coast may be driving this decline. Lesser Yellowlegs is one of the most targeted shorebirds, with estimates of 15,000 shot annually in Barbados, with perhaps half this total shot each winter on Guadeloupe and Martinique, and a significant take also from Suriname and Guyana (Tibbitts & Moskoff 2014). Despite this, Lesser Yellowlegs remains numerous in North America, where it occurs on a variety of salt- and freshwater habitats.

(Breeds throughout much of subarctic Alaska & Canada, E to James Bay. Migrates through USA, where some overwinter, but majority winter from Caribbean & C America to Chile & Argentina.)

Marsh Sandpiper
Tringa stagnatilis (6,
133, 1) About three per
year; stable or decreasing

Gloucestershire Saul Warth,
Frampton-on-Severn, juve-
nile, 28th–30th August,
photo (M. McGill *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Kyles Paible,
North Uist, 30th December
2013 to 2nd January, photo
(*Brit. Birds* 107: 602, plate 62;
plate 337).

(Breeds Ukraine & W Russia, &
occasionally Finland & Baltic
countries. To E, breeds in forest-
steppe region of Siberia to
Mongolia & NE China. Winters
throughout sub-Saharan Africa,
especially E Africa, & Indian
subcontinent E to S China & SE
Asia; also Australia.)



Steve Duffield

337. Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Kyles Paible, North Uist, Outer Hebrides, January 2014.

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* (0, 4, 0) *Very rare, records in 1999, 2012 (two), 2013/14*

Orkney Dennis Loch, North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 17th November 2013 to 10th January, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 602.

(Three races breed in N America; race *caurinus* breeds from S Alaska to W Canada, race *hendersoni* breeds interior C Canada W of Hudson Bay, & nominate race breeds NE Canada from Ontario to Labrador. Migrates along both coastlines & interior USA to winter from coastal S USA to coastal Peru & Brazil.)

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (6, 237, 1) *About five per year; stable*

Hampshire Pennington Marshes, adult, 20th January to 14th April, photo (per Hampshire Recorder), presumed same as Hampshire 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 602–603).

Kent Dungeness RSPB, 1st May, photo (S. J. Broyd, M. Casemore, R. J. Price).

2000 Kent Elmley RSPB, adult, 12th March (J. Badley), presumed same as Kent 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 473) and first seen in Kent 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 476).

(Breeds Arctic Siberia W to Lena River delta, & coastal tundra of W & N Alaska, E to Mackenzie River, Canada. Migrates through USA to winter coastal S USA to N/C America.)

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (532, 168, 2) *About three per year; stable*

Radnorshire Llanbadarn Fynydd, juvenile, 9th October, trapped, photo (A. Cross, P. Leaf).

Shetland Ham, Foula, 24th–30th September, photo (J. S. Nadin, K. D. Shaw *et al.*).

(Scarce & local breeder Norway & Sweden, which hold most of declining European population. Smaller & fragmented population breeds from Poland to Estonia. Also breeds E through European Russia, W & N Siberia E to Yenisey River. Winters sub-Saharan Africa.)

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (20, 71, 2) *Rare, about one per year; stable*

Devon Northam Burrows, 21st–30th April, photo (P. Gibbons, R. S. Laughton *et al.*) (plate 338); also seen Pembrokeshire.

Northumberland Castle Island, adult, 28th July, photo (D. Dack *et al.*); also seen Suffolk.

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, 1st May (N. McMahon, R. Thorne, N. Wood); also seen Devon.

Suffolk Minsmere RSPB, adult, 15th–27th July, photo (R. Drew, D. Fairhurst, J. A. Rowlands *et al.*); also seen Northumberland.

(Breeds locally throughout Mediterranean basin from N Africa & S Iberia to Black Sea, most in S Spain, Portugal & Greece. To E, breeds SW Asia to Pakistan & Kazakhstan but distribution highly fragmented. Winters sub-Saharan Africa. Another race resident Africa.)



Steve Hatch

338. Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Northam Burrows, Devon, April 2014.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (2, 35, 1) Rare, about one every 1–2 years

The following sightings, from seven recording areas, are all presumed to involve the same individual.

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes RSPB, adult, 19th–20th, 25th–27th July and 2nd–9th August, photo (A. L. Cooper *et al.*).

Cleveland Saltholme RSPB, adult, 13th June, photo (M. J. Gee *et al.*).

Co. Durham Hurworth Burn Resr, adult, 5th–6th July, photo (C. Bell *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, adult, 14th July, photo (J. P. Shaughnessy *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley Marshes, adult, 15th July, photo (per birding information services), presumed same Stiffkey, 16th–17th July, photo (per birding information services).

Northumberland Hauxley Resr, adult, 12th June, photo (D. Dack, H. Galley, H. Mears, A. Tilmouth *et al.*), presumed same Holywell Pond, 7th July, photo (A. Curry *et al.*).

Sussex Cuckmere Haven, 30th July, photo (K. Gillam per Sussex Recorder).

Since pratincoles have such a track record of ranging widely (for example, see the 2013 report for details of the similarly well-travelled Collared Pratincole), we have assumed that just one individual was involved in the 2014 records, although its return to the Ouse Washes after a trip to Sussex is notable.

(European breeders confined to N Black Sea in Romania & Ukraine where rare & declining. To E, more numerous across steppes of S Russia to E Kazakhstan. Winters NE Namibia & Botswana, S to N Cape & E to W Natal, South Africa, & W Swaziland. Some apparently regularly winter Ethiopia.)

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* (1, 23, 0) Rare, about one every 2 years

The following records, from five separate recording areas, are all presumed to involve the same bird and the same individual that was seen in four counties (Cleveland, Isle of May, North-east Scotland and Northumberland) in 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 605).

Cleveland Hartlepool Headland and Seaton Carew, adult, 13th July (M. J. Gee, G. Joynt, C. Sharpe, M. N. Sidwell).

Co. Durham Whitburn CP, adult, 13th July (M. Harper, M. Newsome *et al.*).

Fair Isle Buness then Shalstane, adult, 16th–19th June, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 256).

Lothian Cockenzie, Port Seton and Seacliff, adult, 9th–10th July, photo (W. Barber *et al.*).



James Kennerley

339. Adult Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*, Farne Islands, Northumberland, June 2014.

Northumberland Inner Farne, Farne Islands, adult, 20th June to 6th July, photo, presumed same 12th July (per birding information services) (plate 339).

(Tropical seas. West Indies & Atlantic population breeds Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, Pagalu, Gulf of Guinea & widely throughout Caribbean S to offshore N Venezuela. Other populations breed from Red Sea & Arabian Gulf locally through Indian Ocean to SE China, Philippines, & N Australia. Northern populations migratory, wintering at sea to S of breeding areas.)

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (52, 298, 0) About three per year; stable or decreasing

2013 **Yorkshire** Hessele, adult, 13th October, photo (D. S. Sinclair).

(In Europe, small population breeds N Germany & Denmark. Widespread though local Spain, elsewhere colonies small & isolated. To E, breeds discontinuously from Turkey & SW Russia through Kazakhstan, Mongolia & NW China, with isolated population NE China. European population winters coastal W Africa, S to Gulf of Guinea. Asian populations winter Persian Gulf to Indian subcontinent & SE Asia. Other races occur Australia & the Americas.)

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (23, 278, 3) About five per year, influx 1988 (18); decreasing

Devon Exe Estuary, adult, 5th August, photo (M. Knott *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness RSPB, adult, 6th August (H. Chantler, C. Collingwood, Z. Patterson *et al.*).

Shetland Loch of Hillwell, Mainland, adult, 4th–5th June, photo (I. Cowgill, R. Riddington *et al.*).

2013 **Norfolk** Hopton, 10th July (I. N. Smith), presumed same Walcott, 11th July (B. J. Small), note revised dates, locations and observers (*Brit. Birds* 107: 605–606).

(European population breeds Baltic coasts of Estonia, Sweden & Finland to head of Gulf of Bothnia. To E, fragmented populations from Black Sea coast of Ukraine across steppe-lake region of C Asia to NW Mongolia & E China. European birds winter W Africa to Gulf of Guinea, Asian birds winter on coasts to S of breeding range. Other populations occur Australia, S Africa & North America.)

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (23, 185, 5) About 4–5 per year, influx 2009 (25); increasing

Devon Bowling Green Marsh RSPB, adult, 31st May, photo (J. & T. Gale *et al.*).

Norfolk Rockland Broad, adult, 24th April, photo (D. Lester *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Loch Bhrusda, Berneray, adult, 3rd–4th June, photo (A. Stevenson *et al.*).

Oxfordshire Otmoor RSPB, adult, 25th April, photo (per birding information services).

Suffolk Minsmere RSPB, adult, 26th April (J. H. Grant).

(Breeds in small, scattered colonies through S & E Europe from Iberia to Poland. Numerous & widespread from N Black Sea E to W Kazakhstan, with Volga/Ural River complex holding most of European population. Winters tropical W & C Africa & from Nile Delta to E Africa. Other populations occur Indian subcontinent, E Asia, S Africa & Australia.)

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (76, 63, 2) About 1–2 per year; stable

Highland Uig Bay, Skye, juvenile, 23rd December into 2015, photo (M. Lumb *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 108: plates 67, 340).

Outer Hebrides Balivanich, Benbecula, juvenile, 13th–18th December, photo (S. E. Duffield, S. Taylor *et al.*).

2013 **North-east Scotland** Boddam, juvenile, 7th December, photo (C. N. Gibbins).

(In Europe, breeds Svalbard. Elsewhere, restricted to islands in the high Arctic between Franz Josef Land & Arctic Canada, with small numbers N & SE Greenland. Wintering range poorly known, but apparently within or close to edge of pack ice.)



340. Juvenile Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*, Uig Bay, Skye, Highland, December 2014.

David Main

Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei* (0, 9, 1) Very rare, last in 2000 (three)

Norfolk Titchwell Marsh RSPB, adult, 26th May, photo (A. Maddocks, J. Stenning *et al.*) (plate 341).

This, the first in Britain since 2000, is also the fifth individual for Norfolk (following two records, both of two birds together, in 1987 and 2000). All British records have come from East Anglia and southeast England: in addition to the Norfolk ones there have been three birds in Kent, two in Sussex and one in Suffolk (the Suffolk bird was first seen in Kent). The lack of sightings farther west than Sussex (and there are no Irish records), might hint at the origin of British vagrants – Slender-billed Gulls breed locally in the eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea, at scattered locations throughout the Middle East, Iran and Pakistan as well as in parts of central Asia.

The occurrence of British records has also been remarkably stable over time: there have been one or two records (and 1–3 birds) in each decade since the 1960s. Elsewhere in Europe there was a sharp increase in the number of extralimital vagrants during the late 1990s and early 2000s (Ottens 2006), something that does not match the situation in Britain. The origins and drivers of

this apparent increase in dispersal are not well understood, but this species' scarcity along Atlantic-facing coasts indicates that vagrants are most likely travelling significant distances overland.

(Isolated breeding colonies in Mauritania, S & E Spain, S France, Italy, Sardinia & Greece; main breeding range across steppes of C Asia from Ukraine & SW Russia to N Kazakhstan, S to Iraq & Pakistan. Western breeders largely resident but C Asian populations winter Red Sea & Persian Gulf to coastal NW India.)



Keith Pickering

341. Adult Slender-billed Gull *Chroicocephalus genei*, Titchwell Marsh RSPB reserve, Norfolk, May 2014.

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* (8, 203, 8) About six per year; increasing

Argyll Loch Gilp, Lochgilphead, first-winter, 5th January (J. M. Dickson). Ormsary, adult, 2nd–19th March, photo (D. Abraham *et al.*); presumed same Loch Gilp, 1st–31st December, photo (J. M. Dickson *et al.*).

Caithness Thurso, then Scrabster and Castletown, adult, 25th February to 26th March, photo (D. Brown *et al.* per birding information services); presumed same as Caithness 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 607–608).

Co. Durham Cleadon and Whitburn, adult, 21st August to 13th October, photo (D. M. Foster *et al.* per Durham Recorder), presumed same as Co. Durham 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 607–608).

Devon Teignmouth and Dawlish Warren, adult, 16th September 2013 to 24th February, photo (see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 607–608), presumed same Bowling Green Marsh RSPB, 14th May, photo (K. Birchall, M. D. Elcoate). Bowling Green Marsh RSPB, adult, 6th June, photo (R. Eynon, J. Smart *et al.*), presumed same Dawlish Warren, 15th–17th June (I. Lakin).

East Glamorgan Cardiff Bay and Cosmeston Lakes, adult, 12th January to 10th April, photo (A. Bevan, C. Jones *et al.*), presumed same as Cardiff Bay, East Glamorgan 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 607–608). Cardiff Bay, adult, 23rd–30th March, photo (P. Bristow, N. Donaghy, L. Middleton *et al.*), presumed same as Ogmere Estuary, East Glamorgan 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 607–608).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, adult, 5th May, photo (M. McGill *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Between Tresco and St Martin's, first-summer, 19th June (J. Pender, W. H. Wagstaff).

Kent Oare Marshes, adult, 17th July to 7th September, photo (M. E. Wright *et al.*), presumed same as Kent 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 607–608).

Northumberland Swallow Pond, Wallsend, adult, 29th November (S. Parnaby).

Surrey Staines Resr, first-summer, 30th May, photo (R. E. Innes, F. J. Maroevic, K. L. Purdey).

West Midlands Marsh Lane, adult, 1st May, photo (J. Oates *et al.*).

2011 Outer Hebrides Berneray, first-summer, 9th June to 26th August, note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 105: 588).

Bonaparte's Gulls often buck the trends set by most other rare gulls; they seem to favour certain sites and two birds sometimes appear in the same area. The patterns established over two or more years suggest that records in Devon and East Glamorgan have involved multiple sightings of the same individual(s).

For Caithness, the data to enable us to draw similar conclusions are lacking. Although we believe that the 2014 bird is the same as the one seen in 2013, a case could also be made for it being the bird in the Thurso area in 2008 and 2010, or even as far back to 2004. We believe it has been seen at other times and in other years but no records have been received. For the time being we have treated those earlier records as separate individuals. But if a more complete picture emerges that links the birds together, then the statistics would change to reflect that. We urge local and visiting birders in that remote and exciting region to send their records to the County Recorder and to BBRC.

(Breeds widely across N North America from W & C Alaska through Canada to James Bay. Winters locally on ice-free rivers & lakes in N USA, & S along both coasts of USA to Mexico & Caribbean.)

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (1, 92, 4) About two per year; stable or decreasing

Devon Bowling Green Marsh RSPB and Topsham, first-summer, 24th May to 2nd August, photo (G. Clayden, R. S. Laughton *et al.*).

Gower Afan River, Aberavon, first-winter, 8th–16th February, photo (M. R. Hipkin *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, adult, 12th January (D. Walker).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Leighton Moss RSPB, adult, 9th February, photo (G. Thomas, I. Walker *et al.*).

(Locally common on tundra of NE Siberia from Lena River E to at least Kolyma River. In Canada, rare & local breeder W Hudson Bay region, perhaps elsewhere. Siberian birds migrate E past Point Barrow, Alaska in September to unknown wintering area assumed to lie near edge of pack ice in Bering Sea or N Pacific, S to N Japan.)

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (1, 195, 1) About five per year, influxes 2005 (58), 2006 (22); stable

Fair Isle Shalstone, adult, 19th June, photo (P. A. Harris *et al.*).

(Breeds along E seaboard of USA from Nova Scotia, Canada, S to Florida & Gulf coast, the Caribbean, & C America to N Venezuela. Southern populations largely resident but N breeders winter within southern breeding range.)

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 67, 5) About two per year; stable or increasing

Carmarthenshire Loughor, first-winter, 18th–28th April, photo (B. Stewart *et al.*); also seen Gower.

Cleveland Saltburn, first-summer, 21st April (D. A. Money).

Gower Crofty, first-winter, 18th–27th April, photo (B. Stewart *et al.*); also seen Carmarthenshire.

Hampshire Blashford Lakes, adult/second-winter, 19th October to 25th November, photo (R. A. Hume *et al.*).

Highland Canna and Sanday, second-winter into adult, approx. 15th January to 20th February, photo (S. Connor, G. & W. MacKinnon *et al.*).

James McCallum

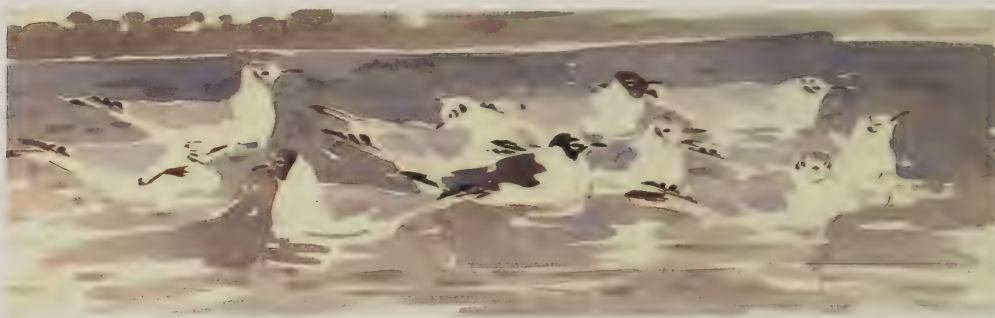


Fig. 6. Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (centre), with Black-headed Gulls *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*, Cley Marshes, Norfolk, August 2014.

Norfolk Breydon Water RSPB, 1st August, photo (P. R. Allard, J. Gilroy *et al.*); presumed same Cley Marshes, 6th–16th August, photo (J. R. McCallum *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 361; fig. 6).

(Breeds locally throughout interior provinces of temperate W Canada, E to Great Lakes & S to Midwest USA. Winters along Pacific coast of South America, from Guatemala to Chile.)

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* (0, 6, 1) Very rare, all since 2003

Kent Dungeness, second-winter, 12th October, photo (D. Walker *et al.*).

Of the seven records since 2003, this is the third for Dungeness (and Kent). The other singles have been in Devon, Suffolk, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. Prior to this year's bird, late spring and summer looked to be the only bet for this plumbeous-legged larid, with three in May/June and three in August. But this October record illustrates the risks of looking for patterns using such a small sample.

Only four decades ago, this was one of the rarest gulls in the world, but the provision of safe nesting habitat and availability of good foraging conditions has permitted a major increase (Oro & Pradel 2000; Oro & Ruxton 2002). A key component of this success was the availability of waste from fisheries, which has a strong influence on both the distribution (Cama *et al.* 2012; Bécarea *et al.* 2015) and the breeding ecology (Oro *et al.* 1996) of Audouin's Gulls. Reform of the EU Common Fisheries Policy will see obligations to land a much higher proportion of caught fish, over the period 2015–18, greatly reducing discards. It is clearly desirable to try and create sustainable fisheries, but it may have knock-on consequences for scavengers like Audouin's Gull (Bicknell *et al.* 2013).

(Breeds locally throughout Mediterranean basin from Spain E to Greece & Turkey, with majority at Ebro Delta & Chafarinas Islands, Spain. Majority winter along the Atlantic seaboard of Africa, from Morocco to Senegal & Gambia.)

Eddie Maguire



342. First-winter American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*, Campbeltown, Argyll, February 2014.

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus* (0, 28, 1) Rare, about one per year; stable or increasing

Argyll Kilmichael, Campbeltown, first-winter, 6th February to 27th March, photo (D. Brown, J. M. Dickson *et al.*) (plate 342).

2003 Cornwall Sennen, first-winter, 12th February to 14th May, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).

(Breeds S Alaska E across C & N Canada to S Baffin Island, Labrador, Newfoundland & NE coastal region of USA. Many resident, others winter S to S USA & Mexico. Other races breed Mongolia to C Siberia, & NE Siberia.)

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*

Canadian High Arctic race, 'Thayer's Gull' *L. g. thayeri* (0, 2, 0) Not yet determined

2012 Lincolnshire Elsham, juvenile, 3rd–18th April, photo (T. C. Lowe *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 105: plate 163; 106: plate 295).

2010 Essex Pitsea Landfill, adult, 6th November, photo (S. Arlow) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plates 259, 260).

The acceptance of the Essex bird by BOURC was announced just a few weeks ago (www.bou.org.uk), and as a consequence we are now in a position to assess further claims.

(Race *thayeri* breeds Canadian Arctic from Banks Island to S Ellesmere & Baffin Island, S to N Southampton Island, & NW Greenland. Winters on Pacific coast of North America from British Columbia S to California & N Mexico.)

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (3, 43, 3) Rare, about one per year; stable

Cornwall Kynance Cove, 24th April to 9th May, photo (D. Eva *et al.*, J. & P. Nelmes per Cornwall Recorder).

Devon Branscombe then Beer Head, adult, 4th April, photo (per birding information services).

Pembrokeshire Tenby Golf Club, Penally, adult, 11th–23rd March, photo (C. Jones *et al.* per Pembrokeshire Recorder) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 125; plate 343).

(Breeds Spain, Portugal, S France & E to Greece. W Asian population uncommon, breeding discontinuously from C Turkey, Cyprus, Israel & Jordan to N Iraq & SW Iran. Palearctic breeders winter sub-Saharan Africa but range uncertain owing to presence of African populations.)



Ian Curran

343. Adult Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*, Penally, Pembrokeshire, March 2014.

Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* (1, 12, 1) Very rare, last in 1989, 1990

Orkney Holland House, North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 23rd October (R. J. Butcher, S. M. Rodriguez, M. Warren).

It is 24 years since the last Black-billed Cuckoo reached Britain, and an entire generation of birders (still) awaits the opportunity to twitch this species. This year's bird was a typically brief stayer in a remote location; a great reward for the hard-working birders on North Ronaldsay. Even if the next one is found in a more accessible location, seeing it alive becomes the next challenge; two-thirds have been found dead or dying, and only three have made it to a second day.

Bond (2014) rated the vagrancy potential of both Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoos *C. americanus* as high, yet there have been four times as many of the latter in Britain. This discrepancy is probably a result of their different autumn migration routes. Black-billed Cuckoos migrate mainly overland, through central America to their wintering grounds in northwest South

America. By contrast many Yellow-billed Cuckoos winter widely in South America and follow a more direct route that takes them across the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, thus becoming more susceptible to displacement by tropical storms.

(Breeds widely throughout temperate N America, from S Alberta to Nova Scotia, Canada, & S to N Oklahoma, Tennessee & SE Virginia. Winters S America from Colombia to W Venezuela, & S to C Peru.)

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (15, 48, 1) Rare, about one per year; decreasing

Cornwall Porthgwarra, first-winter, 23rd–24th October, photo (A. D. W. Tongue, D. J. Unsworth et al.) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 397; plate 344).

(Breeds across S Canada from British Columbia to New Brunswick, & through USA S to C Mexico & Greater Antilles. Winters throughout South America to Argentina.)



Michael McKee

344. First-winter Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*, Porthgwarra, Cornwall, October 2014.

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (44, 38, 2) Rare, about one every 1–2 years

Orkney Holland House, North Ronaldsay, 15th–16th June, trapped, photo (M. Warren et al.) (*Brit. Birds* 108: plate 311).

Shetland Windhouse, Yell, 24th June, photo (B. P. & I. T. Gregson, C. Inkster).

(Breeds N Africa & S Europe, from Iberia N to C France & E to Greece. Also breeds Ukraine, S Russia & S Siberia to W Mongolia, Kazakhstan & Iran. Most winter N equatorial Africa, but some remain S Europe.)

Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus* (196, 212, 2) About three per year; stable

Angus & Dundee Glas Maol, adult male, 10th–11th April (G. Allan et al.), presumed same as Moray & Nairn 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 610); also seen Moray & Nairn.

Highland Cnoc Maoi Donn, Forsinard, male, 15th May, photo (M. Hancock, T. Smith, J. Tomes et al.).

Moray & Nairn Ben Macdui, Cairngorms, adult male, 19th May to 10th October, photo (J. Gordon, R. Ince et al.) (plate 345); also seen Angus & Dundee.

Outer Hebrides Grenitote, North Uist, male, 10th–12th May, photo (J. Boyle, S. E. Duffield et al.), presumed same as North Uist, Outer Hebrides 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 610).

Shetland Clevigarth, Mainland, first-winter male, 14th February, photo (G. F. Bell, H. & J. Moncrieff).

2013 Orkney Blackhamar, Rousay, 3rd July (A. Sarkar, J. & S. Scott).

The plumage of the bird on North Uist differed from that of the 2013 bird, which was a more



Pete Gordon

345. Adult male Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus*, Cairngorms, Moray & Nairn, June 2014.

‘fully white’ adult, leading some to believe that it must be a new individual. However, a satellite-tagging study in Canada demonstrated that Snowy Owls do not necessarily get paler with age, and that some birds can moult into a darker plumage (Bortolotti *et al.* 2011). We thus concluded that it was probably the 2013 bird, returning to the same location and at the same time of year, and this is how it has been treated in the statistics. These findings mean that we may need to adjust the statistics of earlier records in both Shetland and the Outer Hebrides.

(Breeds N Scandinavia & Iceland, depending on availability of small mammals. Outside Europe, erratic circumpolar breeder across tundra & N islands of Arctic Russia, Siberia, Alaska, Canada & N Greenland. Most disperse S in winter but some resident or nomadic if food available.)

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* (0, 19, 1) Rare, about one every 1–2 years

Outer Hebrides Butt of Lewis, Lewis, 23rd–25th October, photo (N. P. Davies, B. A. E. Marr *et al.*).

This species remains rare and unpredictable, this year’s bird being the first since the record influx of six in 2005. The low-pressure system responsible for its arrival lay off Newfoundland on 20th October and crossed the North Atlantic very rapidly, bringing a small influx of Nearctic land-birds to northern Scotland – a Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* on 22nd, two Grey-cheeked Thrushes *C. minimus*, a Black-billed Cuckoo and the Chimney Swift on 23rd and a further Grey-cheeked Thrush next day. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo also reached Cornwall. Chimney Swift is one of the earlier migrants to depart from its breeding grounds in Canada and northern USA, usually in late August and early September. Since October is the month with most British occurrences, it would be interesting to know where these birds initially encounter the adverse weather that brings them across the Atlantic. Southwest England remains the best place to find a Chimney Swift but there is a wide scatter of records elsewhere, including the east coasts of both England and Scotland. The 2014 bird was the first for the Outer Hebrides, and a well-earned reward for those watching one of Britain’s remotest outposts.

(Breeds S Canada & throughout USA E of Rockies to Gulf of Mexico. Migrates to winter upper Amazon basin, Peru & perhaps elsewhere in South America.)

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0, 89, 3) About three per year; recent increase

Norfolk Sheringham, 31st October, photo (A. Clarke *et al.*).

Yorkshire Spurn BO, 31st May, photo (A. A. Hutt *et al.*). Kilnsea, juvenile, 16th October, photo (A. A. Hutt *et al.*).

2013 Dorset Stanpit Marsh, Christchurch, 24th–25th October, photo (L. Chappell *et al.* per

Dorset Recorder).

2013 Kent North Foreland, one, 21st and 23rd–24th October, then two on 26th, three on 27th, one remaining to 28th, photo (B. Hunt *et al.*).

Two Pallid Swifts together is not without precedent: there were two together in Dorset (in 1984), Hampshire (in 2004) and Northumberland (in 2005). But the three together in Kent in 2013 is unique in terms of British records, and coincided with two in Norfolk on 26th October 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 611). These occurred during the prime period for Pallid Swift arrival; the last two weeks of October account for half of all records.

(Breeds throughout Mediterranean basin from Iberia to Greece, but absent from many regions. Outside Europe, breeds locally from Mauritania & Canary Islands across NW Africa & Middle East to Arabian Peninsula & coastal S Iran. Most winter N African tropics, but some remain S Europe.)

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (193, 177, 0) About three per year; stable

Lincolnshire Far Ings, Barton-on-Humber, immature grey-morph, 16th February, photo (M. West), presumed same Read's Island, 9th–10th March, photo (G. P. Catley, N. Drinkall *et al.*); presumed same as Yorkshire 2013 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 613–614).

(In Europe, most numerous Iceland & Norway, smaller populations breeding N Sweden, Finland & Arctic Russia. To E, breeds Arctic Siberia, Alaska, N Canada & Greenland. European birds mostly resident but high-Arctic breeders from N Canada & Greenland migratory, occasionally wintering S to NW Europe.)

Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum* (0, 2, 0) Extremely rare, records in 2008, 2010

2008 Cornwall Nanjizal, first-winter, 8th–9th October; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 107: 614–615).

(Breeds S Canada from S British Columbia E to Nova Scotia, & NE USA from Michigan SE to New Jersey. Winters S America, mainly Colombia to Peru, but E to Venezuela & S to Argentina.)

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (0, 127, 3) About four per year; stable

Cumbria Walney Island, first-winter, 4th November, trapped, photo (C. Raven *et al.*).

Northumberland Newton, first-winter, 7th October, photo (G. Woodburn).

Shetland Sumburgh, Mainland, 25th September, photo (P. J. Cosgrove, J. E. Farquhar).

(Breeds throughout S Canada, & USA E of Rocky Mountains. Migrates throughout E USA to winter N South America. Other races resident South America.)

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (0, 96, 6) About three per year; stable

Cornwall Pendeen, first-winter, 9th–16th November, photo (B. Mellow, R. Wilkins *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder).

Dorset Hengistbury Head, first-winter, 15th–16th November, photo (S. Simmonds, N. Whitehouse *et al.*).

Kent Worth Marshes, *L. i. phoenicuroides*, 16th October, photo (N. R. Davies *et al.*).

Norfolk Warham Greens, first-winter *L. i. isabellinus*, 15th–17th October, photo (S. H. M. Butchart *et al.*) (plate 346).

Orkney Holland House, North Ronaldsay, adult female *L. i. isabellinus*, 15th–20th September, trapped, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).

Yorkshire Kilnsea, first-winter, 15th–17th October, photo (D. Batista, S. Lawton, M. Stoye *et al.*).

2013 Cornwall Pendeen Watch, adult male *L. i. isabellinus*, 4th–7th October, photo (P. Bright-Thomas *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder).

2012 Dorset Portland Bill, adult male *L. i. isabellinus*, 23rd–27th October, photo (per Dorset Recorder), now accepted to subspecies (*Brit. Birds* 105: plate 426; 106: 606).

2002 Shetland Houbie, Fetlar, adult male *L. i. isabellinus*, 14th–17th September, photo (P. Kelly, M. Smith *et al.*), now accepted to subspecies (*Brit. Birds* 96: 600–601).

Following the BOURC's announcement that the nominate form of Isabelline Shrike *L. i. isabellinus* has been admitted to the British List, the first record, a bird in Shetland in 2002, is published here.

In future, records of Isabelline Shrike will be allocated to either *L. i. isabellinus* or *L. i. phoenicuroides* where sufficient details permit subspecies identification. A review of earlier records is now underway to establish whether any can be attributed to a particular taxon.

(Occurs widely across arid regions of C Asia. Race *isabellinus* breeds N China, Mongolia and adjacent S Russia. Race *phoenicuroides* breeds steppe region of C Asia from Kazakhstan to Iran, Afghanistan & N Pakistan. Two other races breed S Mongolia & W China. Winters NE & E Africa, S Arabian Peninsula, S Iran & NW Indian subcontinent.)



Steve Gantlett

346. First-winter Isabelline Shrike *Lanius i. isabellinus*, Warham Greens, October 2014.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (19, 170, 3) About 2–3 per year; stable

Bedfordshire Biggleswade, adult, 10th October, photo (M. J. Palmer, K. & P. Sims *et al.*).

Shetland Baltasound, Unst, male, 16th June to 7th July, photo (P. V. Harvey, R. M. Tallack *et al.*).

Suffolk Hollesley Marshes RSPB, adult female, 6th–7th September, photo (J. Forsyth, N. Mason *et al.*).

(Breeds Balkans to E Poland, with small numbers W through N Mediterranean to S France & NE Spain. To E, breeds locally from Black Sea coasts, across S Russia & Kazakhstan to NW China & SW Siberia. Migrates through E Africa to winter S Africa, from Namibia to S Mozambique & N South Africa.)

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* (0, 24, 1) Rare, about one every 1–2 years



Robin Chittenden

347. First-winter Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis pallidirostris*, Burnham Norton, Norfolk, October 2014.

Norfolk Burnham Norton, first-winter *L. m. pallidirostris*, 5th–16th October, photo (P. Tabor et al.) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 398; plate 347).

(Central Asian race *pallidirostris* breeds C Asia from lower Volga E to S Mongolia & extreme NW China, S to N Iran & N Pakistan. Winters to S & W of breeding range from Sudan, N Ethiopia & Somalia through Arabian Peninsula to W Iran.)

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* (0, 2, 1) Very rare, other records in 2004, 2006

Yorkshire Spurn, first-winter, 20th September to 2nd October, photo (J. Platt, S. Routledge, J. Sadler et al.) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 362; plate 348).

Although Masked Shrike had languished on the British List for over half a century, the record of an adult male at Woodchurch, Kent, on 11th July 1905 was eventually discredited – along with 17 other species also deemed to be ‘Hastings Rarities’ – and was formally struck off in 1962. Even so, hopes of a genuine occurrence always remained high because the species had long been prone to westward vagrancy, as demonstrated by a spread of records in the western Mediterranean region from 1956 onwards, and single birds reaching Finland and Sweden in 1982 and 1984 respectively. Even so, few birders expected that the first for Britain (a juvenile at Kilrenny Common, Fife, from 29th October until 14th November 2004) would be followed just two years later by another juvenile, this time a one-day bird on St Mary’s, Scilly, on 1st November 2006. Being both a first and a long-stayer, the Fife bird was naturally the more popular, and was (probably?) seen by more birders than any other Masked Shrike in the world; yet the Yorkshire bird in 2014 definitely vied for that accolade. Drawing admiring crowds to Spurn throughout its 11-day stay, this first-winter (sporting a patch of fresh apricot feathering on its right flank) constitutes the third record for Britain. Has a run of three records in a ten-year period now robbed this species of its rarity appeal? Surely not – Masked Shrike remains a great bird to find, and autumn remains the time to look for one; of the seven that have now occurred in northwest Europe, sightings range between 10th August (Norway, 2009) and early November. One was seen in southern France on 10th April 2008, and if the next to arrive in Britain is a spring male, then it might just be the most popular Masked Shrike yet...

(Breeding confined to E Mediterranean, & locally E to W Iran. Passage through Middle East to winter N sub-Saharan Africa, from River Niger in Mali, E to Sudan & Ethiopia, & Red Sea coast of W Arabian Peninsula.)



Simon Stirrup

348. First-winter Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*, Spurn, Yorkshire, October 2014.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 279, 15) About ten per year; stable

Bedfordshire Meadow Lane GP, Bedford, 28th–29th December (S. Perfect *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire Ouse Fen RSPB, 4th December (B. O'Dowd *et al.*).

Devon Bowling Green Marsh RSPB, Darts Farm RSPB and Topsham, three, 5th December into 2015, photo (T. Worfolk *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Frampton-on-Severn, first-winter, 6th–8th November, photo (M. J. McGill, N. R. Smart).

Kent Dungeness RSPB, two (including one adult male), 15th February to 9th March, ringed in France, photo (D. Barber, M. Scott-Ham, D. Walker *et al.*) (plate 349).

Norfolk Titchwell Marsh RSPB, first-winter, 18th–19th October, photo (C. Reed *et al.*). Strumpshaw Fen RSPB, two, 19th November (J. Harris *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere RSPB, two (adult and first-winter), 25th October, photo (D. Carter). Snape RSPB, adult, 25th October (D. Fairhurst *et al.*).

Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, 6th December (N. Pleass).

2013 Cambridgeshire Ouse Fen RSPB, two first-winters, 17th January (D. A. Hall, A. F. Mallon per Cambridgeshire Recorder), presumed same as Ouse Fen, Cambridgeshire 2012 (*Brit. Birds* 106: 606–607).

Fifteen records in 2014 sees Penduline Tit breach the '100 records in 10 years' threshold used to determine whether a species should be considered for removal from the BBRC rarity list. This is the final year that Penduline Tit will appear in this report, and from 2015 onwards records will be documented in the Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain, published annually in *BB*. Penduline Tit remains a scarce bird, even in southern England, and is still a prized rarity farther north (how long before Scotland receives its first?), but it was the wider picture, of population trends in Europe, which made the decision to remove it from

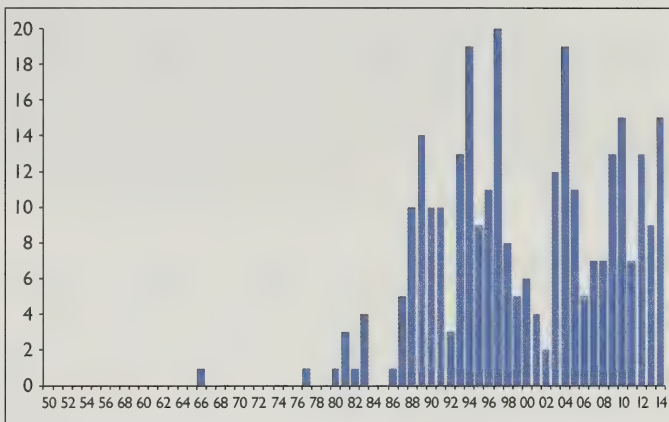


Fig. 7. Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* records between 1950 and 2014. This species has been recorded annually in the UK since 1986; the best month is October, with 108 of the 293 records, followed by November with 66.



Gary Thoburn

349. Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*, Dungeness, Kent, March 2014.

the BBRC list that much more straightforward. From the mid 1970s, sightings and ringing data showed that the range was continually expanding across central Europe (Flade *et al.* 1986; Valera *et al.* 1993). Immature birds have been in the vanguard of this process, increasingly wintering farther west and often returning to favoured wintering grounds in subsequent years.

In the 20 years after the first British record, in 1966, there were just 11 records. Compare this with more than 190 in the next 20-year period from 1986 to 2005, and the highest annual total of 20 in 1997. Records during the last ten years have fluctuated between five and 15 per year, but with an upward trend (fig. 7).

(Widely but locally distributed throughout C & E Europe, from Denmark, Germany & Italy NE to C Sweden & Estonia. Absent from much of NW Europe but locally numerous Spain. To E, breeds from S Russia to Volga River. Largely resident or dispersive Europe. Other races, sometimes regarded as separate species, occur C Asia & from S Siberia to NE China, & winter NW Indian subcontinent, S China & S Japan.)

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* (0, 17, 1) Rare, about one every two years

Fair Isle Ward Hill, 22nd May, photo (D. Parnaby, D. Steel *et al.*).

(Breeds on steppe grasslands from Iberia & Morocco E throughout much of Mediterranean basin, also Ukraine, Turkey & SW Russia to Kazakhstan, NW China & Afghanistan. European & S Asian populations resident or nomadic, while N Asian populations disperse S of breeding range, wintering S to Persian Gulf coast of Iran.)

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* (0, 8, 1) Very rare, first in 1988, last in 2008

Yorkshire Flamborough Head and Thornwick Bay, 11th–13th April, photo (A. M. Allport *et al.*) (plate 350).



Although now approaching double-figures in Britain, this has always been a difficult bird to catch up with. This year's (relatively) long-staying individual was therefore very welcome and, despite some disappearances, it performed well for most who travelled to see it. Records are geographically well scattered, from Cornwall to Orkney, and are also temporally well spread, occurring in most months between April and October: this is a bird to look for almost anywhere and at any time between spring and autumn.

Given the increasing regularity of

350. Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*, Thornwick Bay, Yorkshire, April 2014.

some other Mediterranean 'overshoots', most notably Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*, it is tempting to speculate that it may become ever more regular here.

(Breeds NW Africa & Iberian Peninsula N to S Germany & E through Mediterranean & C Asia, N to Baikal region of S Siberia, S to Tibetan Plateau & E to NE China. S European population mostly resident but Asian populations migratory, wintering NE Africa, & NW India to NC China.)

Eastern Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus* (0, 2, 1) Very rare, other records in 2009, 2011

Cleveland Hunley Golf Course, Brotton, first-winter, 30th October to 1st November, photo (I. Kendall *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 399; plate 351).

Not so long ago, this species was one of the most mythical birds on the Western Palearctic List. No fewer than 159 years elapsed between the first record, on Helgoland, Germany, on 4th



Jim Almond

351. First-winter Eastern Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus*, Brotton, Cleveland, November 2014.

October 1843, and the second, in Rogaland, Norway, on 30th September 2002. But then, with the ice finally broken, more records soon followed: Finland (2004), the Netherlands (2007), Britain (2009 and 2011) and then Helgoland again in 2012. The 2014 Cleveland bird, the eighth for the Western Palearctic, was found on the same date as the one in Hertfordshire in 2011. Interestingly, four of the five records elsewhere in Europe have occurred significantly earlier than our earliest (the South Shields, Co. Durham, bird on 22nd October 2009), being discovered between 30th September and 16th October. This suggests that we should, perhaps, be anticipating this terrific species earlier, during the peak arrival period for Arctic Warbler *P. borealis*. The records from Norway and Finland suggest that the current lack of records from the Northern Isles is surely an omission soon to be rectified.

(Breeds SE Transbaikalia & E to mouth of Amur River, NE China, Korean Peninsula, Japan, with isolated population W Sichuan Province, China. Winters SE Asia from Vietnam & Thailand, S through Malay Peninsula to Sumatra & Java.)

Pale-legged Leaf/Sakhalin Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus tenellipes*/ *borealoides* (0, 1, 0) Extremely rare

2012 Dorset Southwell, Portland, 22nd October, photo (M. Cade, D. & P. Saunders, G. Walbridge et al.) (*Brit. Birds* 105: plate 427; 106: plate 294; plate 352).

When the first Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys* reached Britain in the 1970s, there was disbelief that a species originating from *such* a long way east could reach Britain. Black-faced Bunting *E. spodocephala* in the 1990s, and then Chestnut-eared Bunting *E. fucata* and Eastern Crowned Warbler since 2000 pushed the credibility boundary even farther east. Then, in October 2012, the discovery of a 'Pale-legged Leaf Warbler' in a garden on Portland was probably the biggest rarity surprise of the year and blew apart our preconceptions of what was possible. This species wasn't on the radar of even the most optimistic rarity hunter.

The Southwell bird was well documented and photographed, and the record may initially have seemed straightforward in terms of ID. However, the taxonomy of many *Phylloscopus* warblers is in a state of flux, and the two races of Pale-legged Leaf Warbler had been proposed as distinct species as long ago as 1988 (Martens 1988), based on differences in their songs; and this split was by now widely accepted. But their separation in the field by morphological characters alone was proving to be beyond the abilities of some of the best birders in Asia. In assessing this record, BBRC was faced with the same dilemma – straightforward to identify to the species-pair, but not to taxon. There are minor biometric differences between the two taxa that might be visible in

excellent photographs, but the only sure way to separate them is by song and/or DNA. Even their calls are very similar, and though the Portland bird was heard to call, without a recording the details were not sufficient to allocate this individual to species. Indeed, the differences between their calls are slight, with Pale-legged Leaf having a slightly higher-pitched call (6 kHz or higher) than Sakhalin Leaf (around 5 kHz; Weprincew *et al.* 1989). Sangster *et al.* (2014) recommended that Pale-legged Leaf and Sakhalin Leaf Warblers be treated as two species, a position that BOURC adopted in 2014 (BOURC 2014) when accepting this record.

At first glance it may seem that Pale-legged Leaf Warbler would be the more likely of the two to occur here, as it breeds (marginally) closer to Europe. This is, however, not necessarily the case. The westernmost Pale-legged Leaf Warblers breed in Amurland and Ussuriland in the Russian Far East, c. 7,500 km from Britain. The northernmost point of Sakhalin, where Sakhalin Leaf Warblers are breeding, lies approximately 8,000 km to the east of Britain. Pale-legged Leaf Warbler winters in southeast Asia, while the wintering grounds of Sakhalin Leaf Warbler are as yet unknown but are believed to lie in this region as well. Furthermore, it seems likely that some wintering Pale-legged Leaf and Sakhalin Leaf Warblers have been misidentified when they are largely silent.

All in all, though, despite the fact that it has to stand as an either/or record, it was undoubtedly one of the rarity highlights of 2012.

(Pale-legged Leaf Warbler breeds Russian Far East N to Ussuriland, N Korean Peninsula & NE China. Sakhalin Leaf Warbler breeds Sakhalin & S Kuril Islands, Russia, & Japan from Hokkaido to C Honshu. Winter ranges poorly known due to identification issues; one or both species winter Indochina, Thailand & N Malaysia, occasionally S to Singapore.)



Pete Saunders

352. Pale-legged Leaf/Sakhalin Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus tenellipes/borealoides*, Southwell, Portland, Dorset, October 2012.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (11, 339, 9) About eight per year; stable
Cornwall Church Cove, Lizard, 30th September (A. Blunden *et al.*).

Fair Isle Chalet, first-winter, 22nd August, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*). North Shirva, first-winter, 22nd September, photo (R. Ahmed, D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, first-winter, 11th–14th October, photo (B. M. Clarkson, M. J. Tarrant *et al.*).

Shetland Hametoun, Foula, first-winter, 29th August, photo (D. & G. Atherton). Sandwick, Whalsay, 1st September (B. Marshall). Ham, Foula, 3rd–5th September, photo (D. & G. Atherton). Hoswick, Mainland, first-winter, 20th September, photo (R. Johnson, J. A. Tobias *et*

al.). Norby, Mainland, first-winter, 21st–22nd September, photo (M. Culshaw, P. A. Harris, M. A. Maher, R. J. Nason *et al.*).

(Breeds locally N Scandinavia, becoming widespread across N Russia E to extreme NE Siberia, S to Baikal region, Ussuriland & NE China. Winters throughout SE Asia to Java, Philippines & Sulawesi.)

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 130, 6) About 4–5 per year, influx 2003 (28); increasing

Devon Berry Head, 15th November, photo (M. Langman).

Hampshire Lymington, 3rd November, photo (B. J. Pinchen).

Kent Ramsgate, 29th December 2013 to 29th March, sound recording, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 619. Dungeness RSPB, 2nd January to 12th March, photo (B. Chambers, D. Walker *et al.*).

Northumberland Brier Dene, Whitley Bay, 22nd November, sound recording, photo (A. Curry, N. P. Dales *et al.*).

Shetland Lower Voe, Mainland, 19th–23rd October, photo (W. C. Aspin, I. Calderwood *et al.*).

Warwickshire Hams Hall, 25th January to 16th February, sound recording, photo (D. P. Hutton *et al.*).

(Breeds Altai Mountains to W Mongolia, S through Tien Shan & Pamirs to NE Afghanistan, NW Himalayas & mountains of NW China. Winters S Afghanistan to N India, E to W Bengal. Another race breeds C China from Hebei to S Yunnan, W to lower slopes of Tibetan Plateau.)

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (1, 122, 4) About three per year; stable or increasing

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, first-winter, 31st August, photo (B. J. Porter *et al.*).

Dorset Portland BO, first-winter, 16th August, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (M. Cade *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Content, St Mary's, 29th–30th August, photo (W. J. Scott *et al.*).

Norfolk Kelling, first-winter, 7th September, photo (I. Eggelton, N. R. Rogers *et al.*).

2013 Cornwall St Levan, 6th–9th October (D. Lewis *et al.*).

(Breeds SW Europe from Iberia to N France, S Germany, Italy, Austria, & locally in mountains of N Africa. Winters along S edge of Sahara, from Senegal & S Mauritania to N Cameroon.)

Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus orientalis* (0, 5, 2) Very rare, first in 1987, last in 2009

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, male in song, 3rd May, sound recording, photo (A. Tilmouth *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 196).

Shetland Scalloway, Mainland, 10th–13th October, photo (J. A. Hanlon, P. A. Harris *et al.*) (plate 353).

The separation of the two Bonelli's Warblers is perhaps one of the greatest challenges for anyone interested in vagrant birds. Although there are thought to be some average differences in plumage and bare-part colours, with Eastern Bonelli's tending to be duller (Harvey 1998; Page 1999; Svensson 2002), there is considerable overlap, and none of the putative features have proved diagnostic. Indeed, not all birds can be identified in the hand as there is overlap in the wing formulae of the two species (Svensson 1992). This leaves vocalisations as the only distinguishing feature. The songs of the two species are extremely similar; the key differences were elucidated only recently, and analysis by sonogram is really required to ascertain the differences (Groenendijk & Luijendijk 2011). This leaves the contact call as the best feature, although vagrants tend to be rather quiet. Some are never heard to call, which means that unidentified 'Bonelli's Warblers' are still accepted as either/or by BBRC. Even birds that do call typically do so only infrequently and may be heard by just a few observers. If heard, the characteristic calls are easily distinguished: Western Bonelli's gives a 'hooet' call resembling Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* while Eastern Bonelli's has an almost sparrow-like 'chup'; earlier suggestions that Eastern may occasionally give the 'hooet' call are perhaps erroneous (Svensson 2002).

The five previous records of Eastern Bonelli's have each involved tortuous or contentious identifications. The first for Britain, on Scilly in September and October 1987, was accepted only



353. Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus orientalis*, Scalloway, Shetland, October 2014.

after a lengthy inquiry to establish which calls really had been heard and could be assigned to the bird in view. Some observers heard a 'hooet' call, although this was presumed to have been given by another bird (Wilson & Fentiman 1999). The third for Britain, in Shetland in August and September 1998, was initially identified in the hand as a Western Bonelli's before the significance of the calls was realised. It was later retrapped, the biometrics retaken and the bird reidentified as Eastern Bonelli's (Harvey 1999). The bird on Lundy in 2004 was not heard to call but was identified retrospectively from photographs depicting a suite of plumage characters; something that may need review in the light of the failure to confirm these characters in the past decade. The bird at Portland in May 2009 was heard calling and was the only one to have been sound-recorded.

The two in 2014 followed in the tradition of confusion and controversy. The bird in Northumberland was located by song and initially identified as a Western, but sound recordings were made available online, leading to suggestions that it may have been an Eastern. Recordings were sent to Magnus Robb of the Sound Approach team and Dick Groenendijk; both agreed that the song identified the bird as Eastern Bonelli's. Although it appeared to be an unusual song, the apparent discrepancies could all be explained (Tilmouth 2014).

The autumn bird in Shetland was even more controversial. It was also initially identified as a Western, although the finders later conceded that they could not be sure that the 'hooet' call they had heard came from the bird. The next day, other birders heard 'chup' calls while watching the bird, but after that it was not heard to call again. Some observers felt that the bird did not look dull enough for a typical Eastern but, as already discussed, there are no diagnostic plumage features. One putative feature of the Shetland bird that suggested Western to some observers, the bright yellow underwing-coverts, could be dismissed by reference to photographs of Eastern Bonelli's trapped in Israel. Photos also showed that some, but not all, aspects of wing formula were closer to Western (in some eyes), but again the features were only suggestive and not diagnostic. The bird was not sound-recorded, but then this was not a requirement for any of the previous records. And so, since the diagnostic call was heard, the record was deemed to be acceptable.

(Breeds E Mediterranean, from Bosnia-Herzegovina to S Bulgaria & Greece, E to S Turkey. Winters NE Africa, from Sudan to Ethiopia.)

Western Bonelli's/Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli/orientalis* (0, 76, 1)

Cornwall Kenidjack, 19th September (P. Clarke *et al.*).

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* (0, 35, 2) About 1–2 per year; recent increase

Orkney Rousay, male in song, 7th June to 8th July, sound recording, photo (B. Ribbands *et al.*).

Yorkshire Grimston, male in song, 13th–14th April, sound recording, photo (T. Isherwood, A. F. Johnson, J. Richardson, M. Robinson *et al.*).

(Breeds locally French Pyrenees & S throughout W Iberia. N African range restricted to NW Morocco & N Algeria to NW Tunisia. Wintering range poorly known.)

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* (0, 7, 1) Very rare, first in 1992, last in 2011 (two)

Norfolk Gun Hill, Burnham Overy Dunes, first-summer male in song, 2nd–18th June, sound recording, photo (N. Alford *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plates 217, 257; plate 354).

In its bid to be admitted onto the British List, the Spectacled Warbler had to endure a bumpy ride. One at Spurn, Yorkshire, in October 1968 was initially accepted, then later determined to have been a Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans*, while subsequent claims from Porthgwarra, Cornwall, in October 1969 and on Fair Isle in June 1979 were both deemed to be not (sufficiently well) proven (to stand as a 'first'). Finally, after a triple false start, this plucky *Sylvia* made the grade when a singing male graced Filey, Yorkshire, on 24th–29th May 1992. This popular individual was trapped, photographed and multi-observed during its six-day stay and duly became Britain's first acceptable record, and it remains the most northerly sighting to date. An equally twitchable male visited Landguard, Suffolk, between 26th April and 2nd May 1997 (it too was trapped and ringed), and further singles were seen in Devon in June 1999, on Scilly in October 2000, in Suffolk again in May 2008 and Hampshire in October 2011. Neil Alford's discovery of a singing male at Burnham Overy Dunes in June 2014 healed a festering sore for Norfolk birders, since three years previously (on 6th May 2011) a singing male Spectacled Warbler was found just a few hundred metres farther west on Scolt Head, but was not twitchable. That this latest bird showed so well for over a fortnight was just icing on the cake. In similar vein to the male Asian Desert Warbler *S. nana* that was seen nest-building on Blakeney Point in May 1993, the Burnham Overy bird was watched carrying nesting material for a 'cock nest', despite the lack of any female in the vicinity. Assandri & Morganti (2014) showed that the Spectacled Warbler is now expanding northwards from its traditional Mediter-



Robin Chittenden

354. First-summer male Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*, Burnham Overy Dunes, Norfolk, June 2014.

anean breeding range in response to a warming climate. The first record of this species in Switzerland concerned a pair that bred in 1989 (there have been two nesting pairs in that country since), so there is evidence that vagrant *Sylvia* warblers do pair up in extralimital situations. Patently then, for a wayward male finding itself in suitable habitat, it is always worth putting on a good show!

(Breeds Canary Islands, NW Africa & W Mediterranean N through Spain to S France, also Sicily, Sardinia, Cyprus, Israel & W Jordan. Some populations resident, others migrate to winter N Africa, mostly N of Sahara.)

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

‘Eastern Subalpine Warbler’ *S. c. cantillans/albistriata* (1, 51, 9) *About two per year; stable or increasing*

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, first-summer female *S. c. albistriata*, 16th May, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (P. Howlett, S. D. Stansfield).

Dorset Portland BO, *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*, 1st–3rd May, sound recording, photo (per Dorset Recorder).

Fair Isle Gully, first-summer male *S. c. cantillans*, 8th May, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire St David’s Head, adult male *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*, 13th April, photo (A. & K. Thomas). Skokholm, *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*, 15th May, photo (C. & R. D. Brown, G. Eagle).

Shetland Virkie, Mainland, first-summer male *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*, 24th–27th April, photo (R. M. Fray, P. V. Harvey, J. Kay *et al.*). Out Skerries, first-summer male, *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*, 2nd May, photo (R. Riddington). Baltasound, Unst, adult male *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*, 22nd September to 5th October, photo (B. Robson, M. Tickner *et al.*).

Suffolk Felixstowe, *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*, 29th August to 3rd September, photo (W. J. Brame *et al.*).

2013 Fair Isle Gully, female *S. c. albistriata*, 25th May, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (W. T. S. Miles, D. Parnaby *et al.*).

2013 Northumberland Druridge Pools, adult male *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*, 4th–5th October, photo (M. S. Kitching *et al.*).

2013 Shetland Mid Yell, Yell, adult male *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*, 24th September to 8th October, sound recording, photo (M. Garner, D. Preston *et al.*).

2013 Suffolk Landguard, male *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*, 26th–27th April, photo (P. J. Holmes *et al.*).

2012 Fair Isle Lower Leogh then Observatory, first-summer female *S. c. albistriata*, 26th–27th May, trapped, photo, DNA analysis; note that the information included DNA analysis, which allowed subspecies identification (see also *Brit. Birds* 106: 612–613).

2012 Shetland Skibberhoull, Whalsay, first-summer male *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*, 21st May, photo (J. L. Irvine, B. Marshall).

2011 Fair Isle Schoolton, male *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*, 6th June, photo (N. Riddiford *et al.*).

2009 Shetland Scousburgh, Mainland, first-summer male *S. c. cantillans/albistriata*, 19th May, trapped, photo (J. N. Dymond, R. Riddington); previously found not proven but now accepted after tail pattern criteria were clarified (*Brit. Birds* 105: 624–625).

(Race *albistriata* breeds SE Europe from Slovenia & Croatia S to Greece, Aegean Islands, Crete & W Turkey; race *cantillans* breeds S Italy & Sicily. Winters Sahel from Senegal to Sudan; ranges poorly known due to identification issues.)

Moltoni’s Warbler *Sylvia subalpina* (1, 2, 1) *Very rare, two other modern records, both in 2009*

Fair Isle Vaadal then Observatory, female, 16th–27th May, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (R. Cope *et al.*) (plate 355).

In less than a decade Moltoni’s Warbler has gone from being a largely unrecognised taxon to a newly declared species that is uppermost in the minds of any dedicated rarity finder, although its true status in Britain still needs clarifying. Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans* is currently treated as a single species

by BOURC, with the possible split of 'Western Subalpine' and 'Eastern Subalpine Warblers' being on hold pending confirmation of the position of the North African race *S. c. inornata* (the only taxon in the group not recorded in Britain). The taxonomic revision led to investigations to establish the first British record of each taxon, and the very first British record of any 'Subalpine Warbler' proved to be a Moltoni's Warbler, a male collected by Eagle Clarke on St Kilda (Outer Hebrides) on 13th–14th June 1894 (Svensson 2013). There have been just two other accepted records, both in Shetland in



Ciaran Hatsell

355. Female Moltoni's Warbler *Sylvia subalpina*, Fair Isle, May 2014.

2009: a male at Scatness on 22nd–28th May which was photographed and heard calling but identified retrospectively, after a singing male was identified at Skaw, Unst, on 1st–10th June (*Brit. Birds* 107: 621–622). The latter bird alerted a wider audience to the identification features of Moltoni's Warbler, but there have been no further retrospective submissions. Some claims of other old records have not withstood close scrutiny, while very few other museum specimens have been examined to our knowledge. Nevertheless, the lack of further claims in the four years since the two in Shetland has surprised some, who had predicted that the species would become regular. Given its relatively restricted range, perhaps it will prove to be no more frequent here than other insular western Mediterranean breeders such as Marmora's Warbler *S. sarda* and 'Balearic Woodchat Shrike' *Lanius senator badius*.

The distinctive call of this species, somewhat like that of a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, is one of the most important diagnostic features. An accurate transcription and an appreciation of the significance of the call are important for a straightforward acceptance. Males can be identified by plumage, with the pure pink underparts being especially distinctive, but females can be identified in the field only by call since they share the same tail pattern as 'Western Subalpine Warbler' *S. c. inornata/iberiae*. The female on Fair Isle in 2014 was not heard to call, but it was trapped and identified subsequently from DNA.

(Breeds Mallorca, Corsica, Sardinia & Ligurian Apennines, Italy. Wintering area unknown.)

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (0, 78, 0) About 2–3 per year; stable or decreasing

2013 Borders St Abbs Head, adult male, 30th June, trapped, photo, presumed same 25th September to 2nd November, photo; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 107: 622).

(Largely resident or dispersive throughout Mediterranean basin, from NW Africa & Iberia to S France, N Italy & E to W Turkey & Israel. Some winter N Africa from Sahara S to Mauritania & S Libya.)

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (1, 51, 1) About 1–2 per year; increasing

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, juvenile, 6th September, trapped, photo (D. Bell, T. Codlin, B. S. Duffin).

(Breeds Siberia from Irtysh River E to Yakutia & Sea of Okhotsk, & SW Siberia & NE Kazakhstan through Mongolia to Ussuriland & N & NE China. Winters Sri Lanka & NE India to S China, & S throughout SE Asia.)

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (7, 137, 3) *About four per year; increasing*

Fair Isle Midway, juvenile, 22nd September, photo (M. Culshaw, P. A. Harris, M. A. Maher *et al.*).

Isle of May Rona, 11th September (I. Darling, G. Macdonald *et al.*).

Shetland Quendale, Mainland, juvenile, 7th–8th October, photo (C. P. Griffin, P. S. Woollen *et al.*).

(Singing males regular SE Finland. To E, discontinuously from C Urals E to Kamchatka, Kuril Islands, Hokkaido & NE China. Winters Indian subcontinent, from Nepal E through NE India to SE Asia & Philippines.)

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (–, 624, 8) *About eight per year, breeding; recent decrease now stable*

Cambridgeshire Nene Washes RSPB, male in song, 13th May, sound recording (C. Kitchin *et al.*).

Wicken Fen, male in song, 4th June, sound recording (C. Zöckler). Fowlmere RSPB, male in song, 12th June to 31st July, sound recording, photo (D. J. Radford *et al.*).

Gwent Newport Wetlands RSPB, male in song, 24th May to 8th June, photo (M. M. Meehan *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 218).



Norfolk Brayden Marshes, Horsey, male in song, 3rd–30th May (T. Hodge *et al.*).

North-east Scotland Loch of Strathbeg RSPB, male in song, 29th May to 15th June, photo (P. A. A. Baxter *et al.*).

Somerset Ham Wall RSPB, male in song, 26th–28th April, sound recording, photo (J. M. Mattick *et al.* per Somerset Recorder).

Suffolk Westwood Marsh, Walberswick, male in song, 8th–19th June (B. J. Small *et al.*) (fig. 8).

2013 Norfolk Hickling Broad, male in song, 9th May to 9th August (T. E. Allwood, P. J. Heath, A. J. Kane *et al.*).

2012 Yorkshire Blacktoft Sands RSPB, male in song, 26th April to 28th June (L. & M. J. Pilsworth, P. C. Short *et al.*).

2011 Yorkshire Blacktoft Sands RSPB, one male in song, 9th–12th May, three males in song 13th–23rd May, two remaining to early June, and one to 13th July (L. & M. J. Pilsworth, P. C. Short *et al.*).

(Nominate race breeds Iberia N to S Scandinavia, & E through E Europe, Russia & Ukraine to Black Sea coasts, & winters W Africa from Senegal to N Nigeria. Eastern race *fusca* breeds C Asia to NW China & W Mongolia, & winters NE Africa.)

Fig. 8. Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*, Walberswick, Suffolk, June 2014.

Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata* (1, 145, 5) *About 4–5 per year; stable*

Isles of Scilly Periglis, St Agnes, 11th September, photo (R. J. G. Dawson *et al.*). Peninnis Head, St Mary's, first-winter, 19th–20th September, photo (K. Pellow *et al.*).

Lothian Torness Power Station, 11th–23rd October, photo (I. J. Andrews, M. Eden *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 108: plate 312).

Orkney Northtown, Burray, first-winter, 30th August, photo (B. Hamill, P. Higson, M. Rendall).

Shetland Symbister, Whalsay, first-winter, 10th–15th August, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (J. Dunn, J. L. Irvine, B. Marshall).

2012 Shetland Gunnista, Bressay, 29th September, photo (G. Richards, M. G. Telfer).

(Breeds E Finland, E to C Russia & W Siberia to Yenisey valley, C & N Kazakhstan to W Mongolia & W Xinjiang province, China. Winters N & peninsular India, S to Karnataka.)

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (1, 96, 4) About three per year; increasing

Cornwall Nanjizal Valley, first-winter, 31st August, trapped, photo (K. A. Wilson).

Fair Isle Lower Leogh, 5th September, photo (C. R. Hatsell *et al.*).

Orkney Nesstoun, North Ronaldsay, adult, 4th–10th September, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).

Shetland Skaw, Whalsay, first-winter, 1st September, trapped, photo (J. Dunn, B. Marshall).

(Breeds Black Sea coast from N Bulgaria & Danube Delta E to Ukraine. To E, breeds widely across steppes of S Russia & SW Siberia, Kazakhstan, NW China & W Mongolia, S to Uzbekistan & N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent.)

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 159, 24) About six per year, all modern records since 1979; significant recent increase

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, male in song, 7th June, sound recording, trapped, photo (B. J. Porter, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).

Clyde Islands Arran, male in song, 19th June to 5th July, sound recording (I. Hopkins, J. W. Rhead).

Co. Durham Whitburn CP, male in song, 1st June, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (J. Brown, H. Richardson *et al.*).

Essex Writtle, male in song, 24th May, sound recording, photo (G. D. Evans, N. C. Green).

Fair Isle Hill Dyke, 27th May, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*). Schoolton, male in song, 13th June, photo (R. Hughes *et al.*). Observatory, male in song, 25th–28th June, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (C. R. Hatsell *et al.*); also seen Shetland. Gully, first-winter, 14th August, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*). Observatory, first-winter, 16th August, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Greater London Wanstead Flats, male in song, 29th May, sound recording (D. Darrell-Lambert *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness BO, male in song, 28th May, sound recording (D. Walker *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley-next-the-Sea, male in song, 3rd June, sound recording, photo (T. C. Davies *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, male in song, 26th May, sound recording, photo (E. Stubbings *et al.*).

Shetland Quendale, Mainland, male in song, 19th May, photo (G. F. Bell, N. Harper, R. Riddington, C. C. Rodger). Ham, Foula, 24th–26th May, photo (D. & G. Atherton). Housay, Out Skerries, 28th May, photo (J. & S. Dunstan). Skaw, Whalsay, adult, 28th–29th May, trapped, photo (J. L. Irvine, B. Marshall). Virkie, Mainland, male in song, 13th–14th June, trapped, photo (P. V. Harvey, R. J. Nason *et al.*) (plate 356). Scatness, Mainland, male in song, 13th–14th June, photo (S. J. Minton). East Shore, Virkie, Mainland, male in song, 22nd June, trapped, photo (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*); also seen Fair Isle. Halligarth, Unst, 21st August, photo (R. J. Brookes, M. G. Pennington, B. H. Thomason). Funzie, Fetlar, 22nd September, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

Suffolk Orfordness, first-winter, 30th August, trapped, photo (D. Fairhurst, M. C. Marsh *et al.*).

Yorkshire Long Nab, Burniston, male in song, 25th May, sound recording, trapped, photo (N. W. Addey, C. G. Bradshaw *et al.*). Spurn BO, male in song, 6th June, trapped, photo (N. P. Whitehouse *et al.*).

Spring 2014 proved to be a record one for Blyth's Reed Warblers in Britain, with no fewer than 19 located between 19th May and 25th June. Prior to this the best spring total was just six, in 2011. Although the overwhelming majority were singing males, only one established a territory – on Arran, where it stayed from 19th June until 5th July. Most of the remainder were one-day birds, and just five stayed for more than a day. In contrast, autumn 2014 was poor by recent standards with four in August and one in September, the lowest tally since 2006. Four of the autumn birds were in Shetland, the other being a bird ringed at Orfordness, Suffolk, on 30th August.

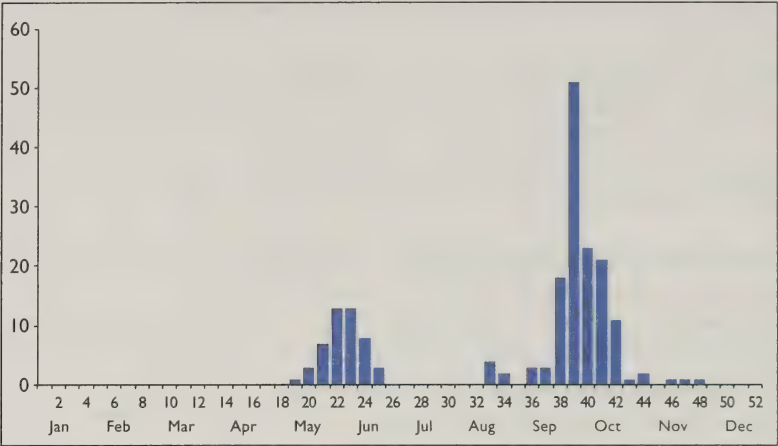


Fig. 9. Discovery dates of Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* by week in Britain (all records).

ten each, followed by Norfolk with seven and Scilly with six. Inland occurrences are exceptional and there have been just six records: Cambridgeshire (November 2012), Cheshire (August 2000), Essex (June 2003 and May 2014), and London (October 2001 and May 2014). Of the 48 spring records, the core arrival period is 24th May to 12th June, with outliers discovered on 11th May and 25th June. In autumn, the peak occurs between 22nd September and 15th October, but ranges from 14th August to 29th November (fig. 9).

In the twentieth century, Blyth's Reed Warblers spread west from European Russia through southern Finland, Estonia and Latvia, and breeding now occurs in Poland and Sweden (Kennerley & Pearson 2010). During this expansion, instances of hybridisation with Marsh Warblers *A. palustris* have increased, with documented cases coming from Finland and the Netherlands, and also from Kenya, where a migrant was trapped (Pearson *et al.* 2012). As Blyth's Reed has consolidated its expansion in Finland, the frequency of mixed pairings there has fallen (van Loon *et al.* 2001; Lindholm *et al.* 2007), but hybridisation at the western periphery of the breeding range remains likely if pioneering birds cannot find a mate of their own species. To date, no hybrids between Blyth's Reed and Marsh Warblers have been suspected from Britain and these have not been considered a barrier to Blyth's Reed Warblers being accepted by BBRC.

Over the past 20 years, an increasing proportion of Blyth's Reed Warblers has been identified in the field, as digital photography has helped us to determine features such as the length of the

Since Britain's first, on Fair Isle on 29th September 1910, a further 38 have been recorded on that island alone, with 59 elsewhere in Shetland and 15 in Orkney. Away from the Northern Isles it remains a great rarity. In England, Northumberland and Yorkshire are joint top counties with



356. Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, Virkie, Shetland, June 2014.

second primary and the presence or absence of emarginations (Golley & Millington 1996).

(Breeds S Finland, Baltic countries & European Russia E through C Siberia to Lake Baikal & upper Lena River, & S through W Mongolia & NW China, Kazakhstan & Tajikistan to N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent S to Sri Lanka & E to NW Burma.)

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (7, 256, 13) About five per year; stable

Avon Chew Valley Lake, male in song, 24th–26th May, sound recording, photo (S. Davies *et al.*).

Berkshire Green Park, Reading, male in song, 22nd May, sound recording, photo (K. I. Tubb *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, male in song, 13th–14th May, photo (M. McGill *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness RSPB, male in song, 14th May (R. J. Price *et al.*). Allhallows Marshes, male in song, 23rd May to 10th June (T. Paternoster, B. E. Wright *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 23rd May, trapped, photo (G. Gregory, C. Hansell *et al.*).

Northumberland Cresswell Pond, male in song, 4th June, photo (A. D. McLevy *et al.*). St Mary's Island, 14th November (N. P. Dales *et al.*).

Shetland Swining, Mainland, male in song, 3rd–7th June, sound recording, photo (M. Evans, P. Walsh *et al.* per Shetland Recorder). Swinister, Sandwick, Mainland, male in song, 8th–9th June (J. G. Brown, P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Ham, Bressay, 20th September, photo (R. A. Haywood, D. Watson *et al.*).

Suffolk Lackford Lakes, male in song, 5th May, sound recording (P. Holness, A. M. & H. G. Sheppard *et al.*). Westwood Marsh, Walberswick, male in song, 16th May, sound recording (J. J. Hoare).

(Breeds throughout much of continental Europe from Iberia to Greece, N to S Sweden & S Finland, & E across S Russia, Turkey & Caucasus to W Siberia. C Asian race *zarudnyi* breeds from Volga to NW China & W Mongolia. Winters throughout C & S Africa.)

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

North European race, 'Black-bellied Dipper' *C. c. cinclus* (–, [25], 1) Not yet determined

Yorkshire Harpham, 19th October into 2015, photo (R. Askwith *et al.*).

(Race *cinclus* breeds Scandinavia, Baltic countries & W Russia. Outside the breeding season, resident or dispersive to S & W of breeding range.)

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (27, 53, 2) About 1–2 per year; increasing



Jim Nicolson

357. White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, Durigarth, Dunrossness, Shetland, September 2014.

Fair Isle Wester Lother, 4th October, photo (R. Cope *et al.*).

Shetland Durigarth, Dunrossness, Mainland, 29th September to 1st October, photo (P. V. Harvey *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 363; plate 357).

(Race *aurea* breeds European Urals & E across Siberia from Yenisey River to Ussuriland, S to N Mongolia, extreme NE China, Korean Peninsula & Japan. Winters widely across S China, Taiwan & S Japan to Indochina & C Thailand. Nominate race resident or altitudinal migrant in Himalayas, SW China & Taiwan.)

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* (0, 9, 2) *Very rare, last in 2013*

Fair Isle Hesti Geo, then other sites, first-winter, 13th–16th May, photo (J. Hunt *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 219).

Outer Hebrides Balranald, North Uist, first-winter, 22nd–23rd October, photo (R. C. Auger, M. N. Fielker *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 400; plate 358).

The two birds in 2014 bring the UK total to 11, eight of which have occurred in autumn and three in late spring, thus giving Hermit Thrush a notably higher proportion of spring records than the other *Catharus* thrushes in Britain. All the autumn records have been in October, with arrival dates ranging between 9th and 28th. All three spring birds have been in Shetland, the one this year on Fair Isle following the first for Britain, on Fair Isle on 2nd June 1975, and one on Fetlar, from 30th April to 1st May 1998.

Of the five species of *Catharus* that breed in North America, Hermit Thrush is the only one that regularly winters there. It is also the last to vacate its breeding range, typically passing through the Great Lakes and the eastern part of the USA from late September to late October. It generally avoids the long sea crossings that other *Catharus* species undertake, and in this respect its movements are closer to those of the American Robin *Turdus migratorius*.

The Hermit Thrush population has increased by 75% over the last 40 years in North America, or 15% per decade (Dellinger *et al.* 2012), and is considered a species of least concern by BirdLife International. There have been five British records since 2010 and, given the species' fortunes on its breeding grounds, perhaps we can look forward to more in the coming years.

(Breeds C & S Alaska, & E across boreal & temperate Canada, S through Rocky Mountains to N Mexico, & NE USA S through Appalachian Mountains. Winters S USA & Mexico, S to Guatemala & El Salvador.)



Martin Benson

358. First-winter Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*, Balranald, North Uist, Outer Hebrides, October 2014.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (0, 31, 1) *Rare, about one every 1–2 years*

Shetland Norwick, Unst, first-winter, 28th September, photo (W. C. Aspin, P. R. French, G. C. Taylor, G. Thomas *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

(Breeds S Alaska & Canada E to S Labrador & Newfoundland, S to N California, New Mexico, Great Lakes & West Virginia. Migrates across E USA to winter from Mexico S to NW Argentina.)

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (0, 56, 5) *About 1–2 per year, influx 1986 (12); stable or decreasing*

Fair Isle Observatory, first-winter, 24th–25th October, photo (G. Gardiner *et al.*).

Orkney Hollandstoun, North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 23rd October (P. Miller, M. Warren).

Outer Hebrides Castlebay, Barra, first-winter, 23rd October, photo (I. N. Ricketts *et al.*).

Shetland Strandburgh Ness, Fetlar, first-winter, 29th October, photo (P. V. Harvey, M. Smith, R. M. Tallack). Rerwick, Mainland, first-winter, 8th–19th November, photo (H. R. Harrop, T. Miller *et al.*) (plate 359).

(Breeds extreme NE Siberia, & E through Alaska & N Canada to Labrador & Newfoundland. Migrates across E USA to winter N South America.)



Jim Nicolson

359. First-winter Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*, Rerwick, Shetland, November 2014.

Siberian Thrush *Geokichla sibirica* (0, 8, 1) *Very rare, last in 2007, 2008*

Shetland Scousburgh, Mainland, first-winter female, 15th October, trapped, photo (J. N. Dymond, P. V. Harvey *et al.*) (plate 360).

To find a Siberian Thrush in a mist-net in your garden must be the stuff of dreams for any back-garden ringer; the icing on the cake with this bird was that it bore a Norwegian ring – truly amazing! This bird had been ringed on 24th September 2014 at Husoya, Traena, to the south of Lofoten Islands in northern Norway. To reach Scousburgh it had travelled a distance of 989 km to the southwest; it would be intriguing to know where it had spent the intervening period.

Of the nine British records, seven arrived between 18th September and 15th October, so a clear and perhaps predictable pattern is becoming apparent. The two outside this period were at Widewall, Orkney, on 13th November 1984, and Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, on 25th December 1977.

Siberian Thrush remains one of the most sought-after of Siberian rarities, and its skulking behaviour only adds to its allure. It is no great surprise that five of the nine British records have

Roger Ridington



360. First-winter female Siberian Thrush *Geokichla sibirica*, Scousburgh, Shetland, October 2014.

been on Scottish islands, the last three all in Shetland, with one on Foula in 2007 (the first for the archipelago), followed by one on Fair Isle in 2008 and now the Scousburgh bird. All three of the Shetland birds stayed for just one day and a lingering bird on the mainland would be extremely popular.

(Breeds C & E Siberia from Yenisey & Lena Rivers, S to NE Mongolia, & E to NE China, Amurland, Sakhalin, & N Japan. Winters C Burma, Indochina & Thailand S to Singapore, Sumatra & Java.)

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* (0, 20, 1) Rare, about one every 2–3 years

Kevin Kelly



361. Adult male Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, September 2014.

Orkney Observatory, North Ronaldsay, adult male, 30th September, photo (T. Mermagen et al.) (plate 361).

(Breeds Siberia from Yenisey River E to Sea of Okhotsk & Kamchatka, & S to Lake Baikal, N Mongolia & Amurland. Winters S China, Taiwan, Indochina & Thailand S to Singapore, Sumatra, Philippines & N Borneo.)

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (1, 204, 1) About five per year; stable or decreasing

Dorset Portland Bill, male in song, 13th June, sound recording (J. Thomas et al.).

(Breeds C & E Europe from S Scandinavia & Baltic countries to Romania & Ukraine, & E through temperate Russia to S Siberia. Winters E Africa, from S Kenya to Zimbabwe.)

Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope* (0, 10, 1) Rare, currently about one every two years; recent increase

Shetland Levenwick, Mainland, male, 3rd–8th October, photo (D. Pointon et al.) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 364; plate 362).

(Breeds European foothills of Ural Mountains, & Siberia from Ob River E to Anadyr & Kamchatka, & S to N Mongolia, Ussuriland, NE Hokkaido & NE China, also isolated population on E slopes of Tibetan Plateau. Winters from Nepal E through Himalayan foothills to NE India, Burma & N Indochina to C Thailand, S China & Taiwan.)



Rebecca Nason

362. Male Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope*, Levenwick, Shetland, October 2014.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (2, 125, 11) About 4–5 per year, influx 2010 (31); recent increase

Avon Shire Valley, Marshfield, first-winter male, 3rd February to 9th March, photo (R. Mielcarek *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 85); also seen Wiltshire.

Fair Isle Klingers Geo, first-summer, 30th March, photo (C. R. Hatsell *et al.*); presumed same Swarzie Geo, 5th April, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*). Observatory then Skinners Glij, first-winter male, 13th–16th October, trapped, photo (P. R. French, M. Peck *et al.*).

Norfolk Warham Greens, first-winter, 13th October, photo (J. E. D. Furse *et al.*). Stiffkey, first-winter, 14th October, photo (J. Gearty *et al.*).

Orkney Hildavale, Westray, 19th November, photo (D. & S. Otter).

Shetland Sumburgh Head, Mainland, first-winter female, 19th September, photo (G. M. Buchanan *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 365). Dale of Walls, Mainland, first-winter, 12th October, photo (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington, R. M. Tallack *et al.*) (plate 363). Geosetter, Mainland, first-winter female, 3rd–17th November, trapped, photo (P. A. Harris *et al.*). Burn of Kirkhouse, Voe,



Roger Riddington

363. First-winter Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, Dale of Walls, Shetland, October 2014.

Mainland, 8th–9th November, photo (P. A. Harris, R. J. Nason *et al.*).

Sussex East Hill, Hastings, 4th November (A. S. Grace).

Wiltshire Shire Valley, Nettleton, first-winter male, 3rd February to 9th March, photo (J. Barnett, M. Hayes *et al.*); also seen Avon.

(Breeds NE Finland E through boreal forests of N Russia & Siberia to Kamchatka, N Japan & NE China. Winters S China, Taiwan & S Japan through SE Asia to N peninsular Thailand.)

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (1, 41, 3) Rare, about one per year; stable or increasing

Argyll Carnan Mor, Tiree, adult male, 27th May, photo (J. Bowler).

Borders St Abbs Head, adult male, 28th–30th April, photo (K. Evans, J. Ibbotson *et al.*).

Fair Isle South Naaversgill then Guidicum, first-summer male, 28th–29th May, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*) (plate 364).

(Breeds E France, S Germany, Italy & Baltic islands of Gotland & Öland, E through C & E Europe to European Russia W of Urals. Winters E & C Africa, from Tanzania to Zimbabwe.)



Steve Arlow

364. First-summer male Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*, Fair Isle, May 2014.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Central Asian races, 'Eastern Black Redstart' *P. o. phoenicuroides/rufiventris/xerophilus* (0, 4, 2) Very rare, first in 1981, last in 2011 (two)

Isles of Scilly Carn Thomas, St Mary's, first-winter male, 30th November into 2015, photo (J. Headon *et al.*).

Yorkshire Newby, first-winter male, 29th November to 3rd December, photo (N. W. Addey, S. Pinder *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 108: plates 28, 365).

These two records fit well into the emerging pattern of vagrancy for this species. All six of the British records involved first-winter males, arriving between 7th and 30th November (although, just beyond BBRC's remit, a bird appeared on Guernsey on 28th October 2003). These are the first records for both Scilly and Yorkshire, following two in Kent and singles in Northumberland and Norfolk.

Although the sample size is small, the arrival period does coincide with that of two other traditionally late autumn vagrants from central Asia, Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* and Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*. There is also some evidence that years in which Eastern Black Redstarts occur tend to be good for those other species; the appearance of the two Eastern Black Redstarts in 2011 and the single in 2003 coincided with the two best years on record for Hume's Warbler, and the second and third best for Desert Wheatear (fig. 10). Both species also occurred in above-average numbers in 2014, so perhaps this theory does hold water.

The discovery of five of the six records in the last 12 years represents a marked change in the occurrence pattern, although whether this is due to a genuine increase in vagrancy or simply to greater observer awareness is unclear. And where are the females? Are we overlooking them? That identification challenge is sure to be another that will generate considerable debate.

(Race *phoenicuroides* breeds Russian Altai & N Mongolia, S through mountains of C Asia & NW China to NW Himalayas & W Tibet; intergrades with races *rufiventris* and *xerophilus* in mountains of W China and Tibetan Plateau. Winters NE Africa, Arabian Peninsula, Iran & Pakistan to W & C India.)

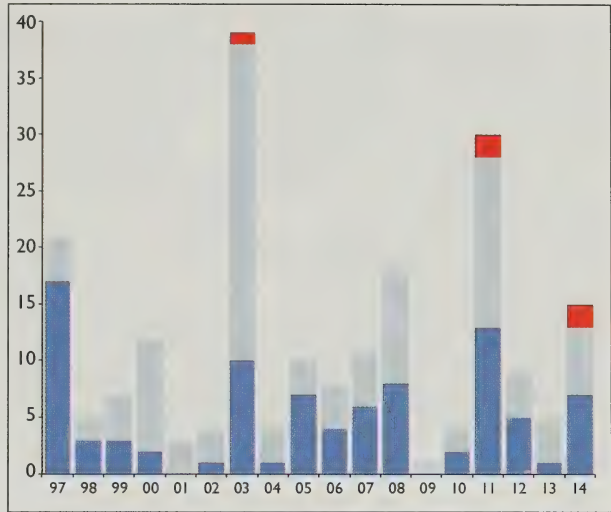


Fig. 10. Annual totals of 'Eastern Black Redstart' *Phoenicuroides ochruros phoenicuroides* (red), Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (pale blue) and Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (dark blue) in Britain between 1997 and 2014.



Graham Catley

365. First-winter male 'Eastern Black Redstart' *Phoenicurus ochruros phoenicuroides/rufiventris/xerophilus*, Newby, Yorkshire, December 2014.

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* (1, 369, 12) About ten per year; decreasing

Co. Durham Cleadon, male, 12th–22nd November, photo (D. M. Foster *et al.* per Durham Recorder).

Cornwall Porthgarra and St Levan, first-winter male, 27th October, photo (L. Thomson).

Fair Isle Meadow Burn area, male *S. m. variegatus*, 27th April to 31st May, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*) (plate 366). **Barkland**, first-winter female, 31st October to 3rd November, photo (C. R. Hatsell, D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, first-winter, 17th–27th October, photo (D. Ryves *et al.*).

Isle of Wight Hersey, Seaview, first-winter, 6th–14th November, photo (D. B. Hale *et al.*).

Steve Arlow



Lothian Torness, 14th–17th October, photo (D. Astins, G. Woodburn *et al.*). Northumberland The Lough, Holy Island, first-winter male, 19th–22nd September, photo (M. Carr, A. Mould *et al.*). Spittal Point, Newbiggin, male, 8th November, photo (G. Bowman, S. J. McElwee, L. Robson).

Shetland Skaw,

366. Male 'Caspian Stonechat' *Saxicola maurus variegatus*, Fair Isle, May 2014.

Whalsay, first-winter male, 6th October, photo (J. L. Irvine, B. Marshall). Everland, Fetlar, first-winter male, 8th–14th October, photo (W. C. Aspin *et al.*). Hoswick, Mainland, female, 11th October, photo (J. G. Brown, G. A. Tyler *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

(Race *maurus* breeds Russia & W Siberia E to Yenisey River and region of Irkutsk, NW Mongolia & N China, S to Tien Shan Mountains, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. Winters Iran to N India. Race *stejnegeri* breeds east of *maurus* to Pacific coast of Amurland, S to N Mongolia, NE China, Sakhalin, Hokkaido & N Honshu. Winters NE India & China S of Yangtze, S to Malay Peninsula, Taiwan, Philippines & Borneo. Race *variegatus* breeds W & N Caspian Sea from Azerbaijan & Georgia, to lower reaches of Volga & Ural Rivers. Migrates SW to winter E Iraq, Arabian Peninsula, & Israel to N & E Sudan, N Ethiopia & Eritrea. Other races occur in Caucasus region, Himalayas & W China.)

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 31, 1) Rare, about one per year; stable

Cleveland North Gare Sands, 23rd–27th November, photo (S. C. Bell, G. Flakes, T. Francis *et al.*) (plate 367).

(Breeds Black Sea coast from E Greece N to Ukraine & SW Russia, & E from Turkey through Kazakhstan & Mongolia to N China, S to Iran & N Pakistan. Winters Africa from N Sahel zone to E Africa, & Middle East to S Iran, Pakistan & NW India.)

John Malloy



367. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, North Gare, Cleveland, November 2014.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (9, 124, 7) *About four per year; increasing*

Angus & Dundee Montrose, first-winter male, 16th–19th November, photo (J. Anderson, R. Nisbet *et al.* per J. Cook).

Cornwall Porthgwarra, female, 26th November to 9th December, photo (M. D. Wallace *et al.*).

Kent Reculver, male, 6th–9th November, photo (A. & C. Hindle *et al.*).

Norfolk Gorleston-on-Sea, first-winter female, 7th–14th November, photo (R. Fairhead, R. Murray *et al.*). Winterton-on-Sea, first-winter male, 30th November to 7th December, photo (A. & M. Mckie *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, first-winter male, 28th October, photo (B. Büche, E. Stubbings).

Suffolk Lowestoft, first-winter male, 6th–9th November, photo (C. R. Dale *et al.*) (plate 368).

(Breeds desert regions of N Africa from Morocco to Middle East, N to S Caucasus, & C Asia from C Iran & N Pakistan to Mongolia & N China. Some N African birds resident, but most winter Sahara & Sahel region of N Africa from Mauritania E to Ethiopia & Somalia. Asian breeders winter Arabian Peninsula to NW India.)



Kit Day

368. First-winter male Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Lowestoft, Suffolk, November 2014.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (2, 68, 1) *About two per year; stable*

Shetland Haroldswick, Unst, first-winter male, 1st–9th November, photo (M. A. Maher, M. G. Pennington, B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

(Breeds E Romania & Bulgaria, E though S & E Ukraine, S Russia, S Siberia, Kazakhstan & Mongolia to N China, E to Gulf of Bohai. Winters NE & E Africa, & SW Arabian Peninsula.)

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* (19, 16, 1) *Rare, about one every three years*

Norfolk Holme BO, 26th April, photo (C. D. Rand) (plate 369).

Photographed by a loyal patch-worker as the bird perched at close range on a convenient handrail, this one-minute, single-observer record follows a blank decade for Alpine Accentors, the previous sighting having been of another one-day bird in Norfolk, at Overstrand on 20th April 2004. These dates reflect perfectly the distinct spring bias that dominates the pattern of occurrence for this species during the last 100 years, during which time no fewer than 17 (81%) arrived between March and June and only four were seen in autumn (including a well-twitched individual at Saltfleetby, Lincolnshire, in November 1994). Inexplicably, perhaps, this is in marked contrast to the pattern exhibited during the previous century when, of the dated records between 1817 and 1908, two were in August and six were in winter (including records of two



369. Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*, Holme, Norfolk, April 2014.

birds killed together in Sussex and Devon in December 1857 and December 1858 respectively).

(Breeds high mountain ranges of NW Africa, Spain & C Europe N to S Germany, S Poland & through Balkan countries to Greece. In Asia, breeds in all major ranges from C Turkey E through C Asia, S to Himalayas & E to Japan & Taiwan. In winter, most European birds descend below snowline near breeding areas but some disperse to lowlands.)

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (0, 304, 15) *About ten per year; significant increase*

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, first-summer female, 25th–26th May, photo (B. J. Porter, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*). Bardsey, first-winter, 8th–12th August, photo (B. J. Porter *et al.*).

Cheshire & Wirral Red Rocks Marsh, male, 5th May, sound recording, photo (J. E. Turner, E. Williams).

Dorset Portland BO, first-summer female, 11th May, photo (per Dorset Recorder).

Highland Balnakeil, male, 18th–19th June, photo (P. Stronach *et al.*).

Isle of May First-winter, 4th–5th September (J. R. P. & M. Osborne, K. D. Shaw *et al.*).

North-east Scotland Nigg Bay, Girdle Ness, first-winter, 28th August (M. Lewis).

Northumberland Brownsman, Staple Island and Inner Farne, Farne Islands, first-winter, 27th August (D. Kinchin-Smith, D. Roche, E. Witcutt *et al.* per D. Steele).

Outer Hebrides Howmore, South Uist, first-winter, 31st August to 8th September, photo (A. Stevenson *et al.*). Borge Point, Benbecula, first-winter, 7th September, photo (S. E. Duffield).

Loch an Duin Mhoir, South Uist, first-winter, 13th September, photo (S. Pinder, C. C. Rodger).

Shetland Virkie, Mainland, first-summer female, 1st May, photo (R. Riddington, R. M. Tallack *et al.*). Haroldswick, Unst, first-summer male, 23rd–24th May, photo (R. J. Brookes *et al.*) (plate 370). Grutness, Mainland, first-winter, 12th September, photo (P. A. Harris, R. Riddington, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

Yorkshire Flamborough, first-winter, 5th–9th November, sound recording, photo (A. M. Allport *et al.*).

2013 Isles of Scilly Lower Moors, St Mary's, adult, 28th–31st August, photo (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

Following a run of good years and ever-increasing numbers, 2014 sees Citrine Wagtail appearing in the BBRC annual report for the last time (see *Brit. Birds* 108: 288–291). Since the first records, on Fair Isle in 1954, it has occurred with increasing regularity. Over the next 30 years the increase was slow and steady but since the early 1990s the upward trend is striking (fig. 11). With 15 records in 2014 alone, there have now been 145 records in the last ten years, during which it has averaged well over ten records per year, so it comfortably meets the threshold for removal from the BBRC list.

Previously restricted as a breeding bird to the former Soviet Union, Citrine Wagtail has since extended its range well to the west. Data from the 1990s reveal that there were then up to 16,500 pairs breeding in eastern Europe outside Russia (BirdLife International 2004). Doubtless numbers have continued to increase since then.

Island groups at either end of the country are responsible for the great majority of records. Fair Isle alone has 74, with another 66 in the rest of Shetland. Scilly accounts for 30 records and Orkney 20;

these are followed by Cornwall with 19, and a further three recording areas have more than ten records each. Yet no fewer than 40 recording areas are still waiting to get on the score sheet, including most inland counties. Away from the coast this remains a top-drawer find.

Citrine Wagtail is currently divided into three races: *M. c. citreola* breeding in the north and east of the range, *M. c. werae* in the west and south, and *M. c. calcarata* in south-central Asia. Alström & Mild (2003) considered *werae* and *citreola* to be morphologically and vocally inseparable and synonymised them. Yet DNA work reported in Pavlova *et al.* (2003)

suggested that *werae* may represent a separate species, and is perhaps closer to the southerly races of Yellow Wagtail *M. flava*, while nominate *citreola* is closer to the more northern and eastern races of Yellow Wagtail. This arrangement has yet to gain widespread acceptance and remains controversial and counterintuitive. But if a male of the black-backed form *M. c. calcarata* was to appear, then that surely would feature in this report; and since there is a record of this form from eastern Turkey in May 2011 (Kirwan *et al.* 2014), we should be alert to the possibility.

(Breeds Baltic countries, S Finland, Belarus, Ukraine & S Russia, E across N Siberia to Taimyr Peninsula & S to C Siberia; also C & E Turkey E to Kazakhstan, Mongolia & N China. Black-backed race *calcarata* breeds C Asia to Tibetan Plateau. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent, S China & SE Asia to peninsular Thailand.)

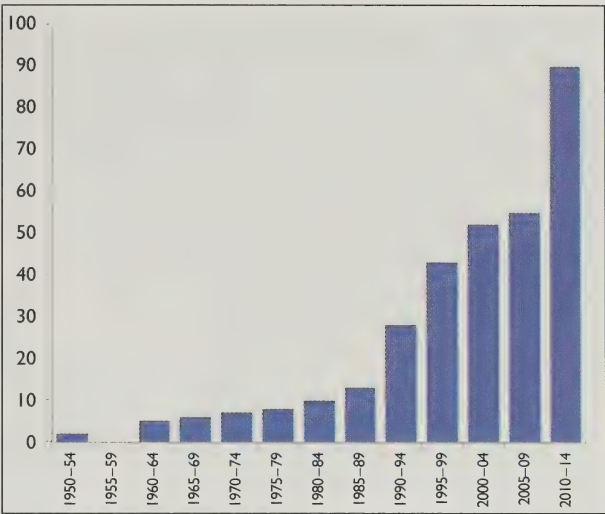


Fig. 11. Records of Citrine Wagtail in Britain by five-year period, 1950–2014.



Rob Brookes

370. First-summer male Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Haroldswick, Unst, Shetland, May 2014.

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (1, 21, 3) Rare, about one every 1–2 years
Isles of Scilly Airfield, St Mary's, first-winter, 5th–9th October, photo (W. J. Scott *et al.*).
Pembrokeshire St David's Head, first-winter, 18th November, photo (B. Haycock, M. Young-Powell).



371. First-winter Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*, Calder Wetlands, Yorkshire, December 2014.

Yorkshire Calder Wetlands, first-winter, 8th December into 2015, sound recording, photo (J. Holliday *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 108: plates 3, 371).

With three records, 2014 was a good year for Blyth's Pipit, a welcome return to form for a species which had been strangely absent from these pages since 2007. The two autumn records were typical, and the Scilly bird consolidates the islands' position as the best place to see this species in Britain (now with five records). The Pembrokeshire bird was, however, new for that county and only the second for Wales (the first was on Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, on 16th–17th October 2005). The wintering bird at Calder Wetlands was by far the most notable of this year's trio, and certainly the most well watched. Although not without precedent (the first to be discovered inland, also in December, was at Gringley Carr, Nottinghamshire, in December 2002), it provides further evidence that inland areas can still deliver a major rarity. After decades of obscurity, the plumage and vocal characters of this species are now well understood and it will hopefully not be another seven years before the next is discovered.

(Breeds S Transbaikalia, N Mongolia & extreme NE China. Winters locally throughout Indian subcontinent S to Sri Lanka.)

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (4, 96, 2) About three per year; stable or increasing

Orkney Sander, North Ronaldsay, 8th October (P. J. Donnelly *et al.*).

Shetland Baltasound, Unst, 22nd–25th September, photo (K. Bayes, I. Johnson, M. Kerby, D. R. Watson *et al.*).

(Breeds scrub-tundra & taiga of subarctic Eurasia, from Pechora region of NE Russia E to Chukotskiy Peninsula & Kamchatka. Migrates through E China & Taiwan to wintering areas in Philippines, N Borneo & N Sulawesi. Isolated race, *menzbieri*, breeds NE China & Amur River region of SE Russia.)

Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens* (1, 41, 1) About 1–2 per year; recent increase

Cheshire & Wirral Burton Marsh, 20th December 2013 to 16th January, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 641.

Lancashire & North Merseyside Cocksand, 4th May, photo (J. Gluth, S. G. Piner).

(North American race *rubescens* breeds W Greenland, N & NW Canada, & Alaska, winters W & S USA, Mexico & C America. Asian race *japonica* breeds NE Siberia W to Baikal region, winters N Pakistan & NW India to S & E China, S Korea & S Japan.)

Arctic Redpoll *Acanthis hornemanni*

Greenland race, 'Hornemann's Redpoll' *A. h. hornemanni* (12, 120, 1)

About four per year, influxes 2012 (30), 2009 (22); recent increase

Shetland Veensgarth, Mainland, first-winter, 26th September to 6th October, photo (W. C. Aspin, G. C. Taylor *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

2013 Shetland Sullom Plantation, Mainland, three, 27th September (M. S. Chapman *et al.*).

(Race *hornemanni* breeds Ellesmere & Baffin Island, Canada, & N Greenland S to Scorsby Sound. Disperses erratically to S of breeding range in winter, irregularly reaching NW Europe.)

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (73, 283, 14) About nine per year, influxes 2013 (101), 2008 (59); stable

Flintshire Nercwys Mountain, four (including one male and two females), 17th February, photo (G. Morgan).

Gloucestershire Woorgreens, at least 17 (12 males, five females), 9th November 2013 to 26th March, photo (see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 642–644); adult male, presumed one of same, 15th September, photo (G. Black, B. Pitcher).

Greater Manchester Dove Stone RSPB, first-winter male, 30th March to 18th April, photo (J. Parker *et al.*).

Kent Hemsted Forest, first-winter male, 13th October 2013 to 25th May, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 642–644 (note also revised ageing).

Lincolnshire Forest Pines Golf Course, Broughton, adult, 9th–28th February, sound recording, photo (C. Heaton, M. Johnson *et al.*).

Lothian Tynninghame, three, 8th–9th June, seven on 10th June (two males, one in song, and five females) (N. Milligan, C. D. Scott *et al.*).

Shropshire Wyre Forest, three (two males, female), 28th November 2013 to 31st March, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 642–644.

Surrey Leith Hill, female, 8th October 2013 to 16th February, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 642–644.

Wiltshire Barnsell Copse, male, 27th January (P. Combridge).

Yorkshire Broomhead Resr, at least 11 (two adult males, three adult females, six juveniles), 12th August 2013 to 7th May, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 107: 642–644.

(Palearctic race *bifasciata* breeds larch *Larix* forests of N Eurasia from N Scandinavia to E Siberia, reaching Sea of Okhotsk & S to Baikal region. Outside breeding season occasionally disperses as far as NW Europe. Nominate race *leucoptera* breeds across N North America.)

Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea* (0, 6, 1) Very rare, last in 1982, 2011 (two)



Keith Gillon

372. First-winter female Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*, Brevig, Barra, Outer Hebrides, October 2014.

Outer Hebrides Brevig, Barra, first-winter female, 6th–9th October, trapped, photo (K. Gillon *et al.*) (plate 372).

(Breeds SE Canada, & throughout E USA S to E Oklahoma, C Alabama & N Georgia. Winters South America from Colombia to Bolivia.)

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* (2, 44, 2) Rare, about one per year; increasing

Argyll Corra, Otter Ferry, male in song, 19th June, photo (T. Callan, J. M. Dickson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 258).

Suffolk Landguard BO, 19th June, trapped, photo (T. Bagworth *et al.*).

(Breeds North America from SE Yukon E to Newfoundland, S to Great Lakes & N USA to New Jersey. Winters SE USA, from Massachusetts S to Florida, Texas & into N Mexico & California.)

Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia* (0, 4, 1) Very rare, last in 1998, 2008

Fair Isle Burkle then Boini Mire, male, 27th April to 2nd May, photo (D. N. Shaw *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 197; plate 373).

This was Britain's fifth Cretzschmar's and Fair Isle's third, following birds there on 10th–20th June 1967 and 9th–10th June 1979. The two other British records have both come from Orkney: Stronsay on 14th–18th May 1998 and North Ronaldsay on 19th–21st September 2008. The first two Fair Isle records had the species fixed in some people's minds as a late spring overshoot, but the subsequent records have not maintained this pattern. All the spring birds have turned up in clear, sunny conditions, with southeasterly winds and a stable area of high pressure over the Continent.

The bird in 2014 was particularly early, appearing in April on a date that would be unusual for Ortolan Bunting *E. hortulana* in Scotland. It was found by former FIBO warden and current Fair Isle resident Deryk Shaw, who was looking for a Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* found earlier and which he needed for his house list. Then, David Parnaby, the current Observatory warden, out searching for the Cretzschmar's (which went missing for the best part of a day soon after it was found), discovered a 'Caspian Stonechat' *Saxicola maurus variegatus* – a dramatic example of how finding one good bird can start a chain reaction as observers concentrate on one small area!



Roger Riddington

373. Male Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia*, Fair Isle, April 2014.

All the British records of Cretzschmar's Bunting have involved males, not surprisingly given the subtle differences between most female and immature Cretzschmar's and Ortolan Buntings. Dull Ortolan-types should be examined closely, not only to check for a female or first-winter Cretzschmar's, but also because there is the possibility of the ultimate prize in the form of a potential first for Britain: Grey-necked Bunting *E. buchanani*, a species which has reached Finland, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands.

(Breeds SE Europe & SW Asia from Albania & S Greece through S Turkey & Cyprus to N Israel & W Jordan. Winters NE Africa.)

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (6, 203, 5) *About five per year; stable or decreasing*

Norfolk Cromer, male, 26th May, photo (S. Bignell per Norfolk Recorder). West Runton, female, 28th May to 1st June, photo (I. Prentice *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, female, 21st–24th May, photo (J. Moss *et al.*).

Shetland Sumburgh Head, Mainland, adult female, 4th September (P. V. Harvey). Out Skerries, adult female, 29th September, photo (D. Cooper, B. Kay *et al.*).

(Breeds C Italy to Greece, Turkey, N Iraq, W Iran, & N through Caucasus to Ukraine & S Russia. Winters W & C India.)

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Setophaga coronata* (0, 18, 3) *Rare, about one every two years*

Co. Durham High Shincliffe, first-winter male, 26th January to 16th February, photo (J. Power *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 105).

Orkney Scott's Haa, North Ronaldsay, female, 6th May, photo (M. Warren *et al.*); also seen Shetland.

Shetland Haroldswick, Unst, female, 7th–8th May, photo (R. J. Brookes *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 198); also seen Orkney. Virkie, Mainland, 29th September, sound recording (R. Riddington *et al.*); presumed same Grutness, Mainland, 30th September to 1st October, photo (G. F. Bell *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 366; plate 374).

The detail now available from photographs is not only helpful in determining species but, as in the case of the spring bird seen in both Orkney and Shetland, also individuals! It is unlikely that anyone would have proposed that these two sightings, some 175 km and one day apart, involved the same bird; a multiple arrival would be the default explanation. But the unusual pattern of crown feathering, perhaps a minor injury, meant that 'presumed same' had to be the conclusion. Some even suggested that perhaps



Roger Riddington

374. Yellow-rumped Warbler *Setophaga coronata*, Grutness, Shetland, September 2014.

these records related to the winter bird from Co. Durham but, as can be seen from the details above, that was determined to be a first-winter male rather than a female.

(Nominate race breeds North America from Alaska E throughout Canada to Newfoundland, S to Michigan & Massachusetts, USA. Migrates E of Rocky Mountains to winter throughout C America & Caribbean. Another race breeds SW Canada & W USA.)

Appendix 1. Records of former BBRC species, removed from the list prior to 2014

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (340, 364, –) [statistics to end of 2012]

2012 Cumbria Ulpha Meadows, first-winter, 6th–9th May (M. Chadwick), presumed same as Cumbria 2012 (*Brit. Birds* 106: 582–586).

2012 Yorkshire Staveley, 3rd February, photo (*Brit. Birds* 107: 648–649); now presumed same as North Cave Wetlands, Yorkshire (*Brit. Birds* 106: 582–586).

(Breeds S France & Spain; otherwise, European breeding range centred N & W of Black Sea in Ukraine & Romania, with small, declining population in Balkans. To E, breeds from Volga River to Kazakhstan. Migratory, most wintering E Africa, but W European population winters Morocco & Mediterranean basin. Resident or dispersive populations occur Africa, S Asia, Australia, E USA & the Caribbean to N South America.)

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (92, 483, –) [statistics to end of 2006]

1986 Leicestershire & Rutland Stanford Resr, 25th May, presumed same as Northamptonshire 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 548).

(Breeds discontinuously from NW Africa, throughout S Europe, N to C France & Switzerland, to Ukraine. To E, breeds locally through Turkey & Caucasus to Iran, Afghanistan & N Pakistan. Winter range unknown, but assumed to lie within Afrotropics or W India.)

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 430, –) [statistics to end of 2012]

2012 Outer Hebrides Ardvienish, Barra, 16th October, photo (J. M. & T. P. Drew, B. A. Taylor).

(Race *yunnanensis* breeds N Urals E across C & E Siberia to N China, Kamchatka, Kuril Islands & Japan. Winters widely across S China, Taiwan & throughout N & C parts of SE Asia. Nominate race breeds Himalayas & mountains of WC China, wintering throughout Indian subcontinent.)

Appendix 2. Records where identification accepted, but placed in Category D (see *Ibis* 136: 253)

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

Borders West Water Resr, adult, 31st October, photo (R. D. Murray); also seen Lothian.

Lothian Aberlady Bay, adult, 22nd–30th September, photo (K. Gillon, A. Marland *et al.*); presumed same Wester Broomhouse, Dunbar, 7th–9th December, photo (M. D. Hodgkin *et al.*); also seen Borders.

2012 Clyde Forth then Carnwath, adult, 13th–25th March, photo (I. Fulton, V. Hutchin *et al.*), presumed same as Northumberland 2012 (*Brit. Birds* 106: 637); also seen North-east Scotland.

2012 North-east Scotland Rattray Head, 1st–4th April, photo (T. Marshall); also seen Clyde.

(Breeds on tundra of Canadian Arctic, from Perry River region of Northwest Territories to N Manitoba, including Southampton Island, E to N Ontario. Most migrate across C USA to wintering grounds in S USA. Numbers increasing on Atlantic seaboard of USA & N Mexico.)

Appendix 3. Records where identification accepted, but origin is uncertain

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

2013 Norfolk From Breydon Water to Blakeney, adult, 31st October 2012 to 29th March (per C. Batty); also seen Northumberland 2012.

2012 Northumberland Budle Bay, two adults, 2nd–23rd September (M. Carr, C. Knox),

presumed same as Norfolk 2012 (*Brit. Birds* 106: 638–639); also seen Norfolk.

(Breeds on tundra of Canadian Arctic, from Perry River region of Northwest Territories to N Manitoba, including Southampton Island, E to N Ontario. Most migrate across C USA to wintering grounds in S USA. Numbers increasing on Atlantic seaboard of USA & N Mexico.)

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*

Highland Loch Fleet, adult, 4th–11th September, photo (A. Leow-Dyke, S. O'Hara *et al.*).

(Breeds Taimyr Peninsula, Siberia. Migrates SW to winter coastal regions of W Black Sea in Romania & N Bulgaria. Small numbers regularly winter Netherlands, Greece & Turkey. Some may still use former wintering areas along Caspian Sea.)

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

Clyde Banton Loch, Kilsyth, 2nd November to 29th December, photo (R. M. Kay, B. Zonfrillo *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Loch a Mhuilinn, South Uist, male, 27th–30th March, photo (S. E. Duffield *et al.*).

2009 Shetland Lochs of Brow, Spiggie and Hillwell, Mainland, male, 16th April to 20th June, photo (R. M. Fray *et al.*).

At the time of writing, Wood Duck remains in Category E of the British List, but there are some records that we consider possible candidates for 'elevating' the species to Category D. The three records above, two of them in 2014, seem potential candidates and so are listed here; see also *Brit. Birds* 106: 639.

(Breeds S Canada from S British Columbia to Nova Scotia, S to California & throughout most of USA E of Rocky Mountains to Texas & Florida. Northern breeders winter to S of breeding range.)

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

Dorset Radipole Lake RSPB, male, 17th April, photo (E., S. & T. Levy).

We received a submission only for the date given above, but we are aware that the bird remained in the Radipole area all year. It was first seen in 2008 (*Brit. Birds* 102: 599).

(Breeds S Alaska, E across S Canada & N USA to Newfoundland, & S to Oregon, Virginia & locally almost to Gulf coast. Winters coastally, from S limit of breeding range to California & Florida.)

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

Cambridgeshire Berry Fen, 16th May (G. Harland *et al.*).

This is one of two that we understand escaped from a private collection in Bedfordshire. At least one of these birds has also been seen in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. Both birds are colour-ringed.

(Breeds along Atlantic coast of France & locally throughout Mediterranean basin to Black Sea. To E, breeds from S Siberia & C Asia to NW China & S to Hong Kong. Most European birds winter sub-Saharan Africa &, increasingly, in SW Iberia. Asian breeders winter S & SE Asia & S China.)

Appendix 4. Records held until taxonomy or identification criteria are resolved (see *Brit. Birds* 108: 549)

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Central Asian race, 'Black-eared Kite' *M. m. lineatus*

2007 Norfolk Snettisham, Blakeney and Cley, 28th November 2006 to 13th April, photo, presumed same as Lincolnshire 2006, below.

2006 Lincolnshire Freiston Shore RSPB, juvenile, 2nd–21st November, photo.

(Breeds C Asia from Turkmenistan to Mongolia & China, & Siberia from Ob River E to Japan. Intergrades with nominate race occur in west of breeding range. Northern breeders winter throughout southern Asia to S of breeding range.)

Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans*

2005 Dorset Stanpit Marsh, Christchurch, 10th May, photo.

2002 Devon Dawlish Warren, adult male, 18th May, photo. Dawlish Warren, Powderham and Cockwood, 8th July, photo. Dawlish Warren and Torbay, 18th–19th July, photo; presumed same as Meirionnydd 2002, below.

2002 Meirionnydd Porthmadog, 23rd–26th July, photo; presumed same as Devon 2002, above.

(Breeds in colonies on Pacific coast of California, USA, & Gulf of California, Mexico. After breeding disperses N along Pacific coast S Washington. Most winter South America S of Ecuador.)

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*

North European race, *D. m. minor*

2012 Shetland Scalloway, Mainland, juvenile female, 15th–19th October, photo.

(Breeds Scandinavia to W Siberia from tree line. Southern range limit poorly defined due to intergrades with other races. Resident or partial migrant S to Denmark, Baltic States & S Russia.)

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*

Irish race, *P. a. hibernicus*

2008 Cornwall Nanjizal, first-year male, 20th–22nd October, trapped, photo.

(Resident Ireland.)

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Central European race, *A. c. europaeus*

2010 Kent Dungeness, three, 18th October to 24th November, photo.

(Breeds continental C Europe, exact limits not defined due to intergrades with nominate in N Europe & with other races in S Europe.)

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Eastern races, *S. c. icterops/rubicola*

2005 Northumberland Brownsman, Farne Islands, first-winter, 2nd November, photo.

(Races *icterops/rubicola* breed C Turkey to Caucasus region, Iran & Afghanistan, E through C Asia to Baikal region of S Siberia, W Mongolia & NW China. Winters E Africa from Uganda to Zimbabwe.)

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Caucasus race, *L. m. africana*

2010 Fair Isle Ward Hill, 26th September, photo.

(Breeds E Black Sea from Crimea & NE Turkey through Caucasus Mountains to Armenia, N Iran & NE Afghanistan. Intergrades with nominate race in west of breeding range. Winters E Africa.)

Italian Sparrow *Passer italiae*

2013 Norfolk Northrepps, 23rd August to 6th September, photo.

(Resident Italy, Corsica, Sardinia & Crete, intergrading with House Sparrow *P. domesticus* in N Italy & Switzerland, & with Spanish Sparrow *P. hispaniolensis* in S Italy, Sicily & Malta.)

Appendix 5. Records not accepted

2014 Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli* Cemlyn, Anglesey, 4th October. Canada Goose *B. c. interior* Lochgilphead, Argyll, 1st March. Baikal Teal Lunt Meadows, Lancashire & N Merseyside, 10th November. Lesser Scaup Loch a' Phuill, Tiree, Argyll, 1st–30th October. Ardnave Loch, Argyll, 23rd October. Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* Spurn, Yorkshire, 2nd November. Black Stork Baston, Lincolnshire, 21st May. Short-toed Eagle Clanfield, Hampshire, 21st June. Totton, Hampshire, 24th June. Stodmarsh, Kent, 30th June. Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, 22nd August. Ashdown Forest, Sussex, 9th August. Alvecote Pools, Warwickshire, 9th November. Standlynch Down, Wiltshire, 13th June. Pallid Harrier Chosely, Norfolk, 15th

September. Eastside, South Ronaldsay, Orkney, 19th September. **Booted Eagle** *Aquila pennata* Worth, Kent, 25th May. **Black-winged Stilt** Offord Cluny, Cambridgeshire, two, 17th May. **Blashford Lakes**, Hampshire, 2nd August. **Breydon Water RSPB**, Norfolk, 4th–7th August. **Pacific Golden Plover** Spurn, Yorkshire, 7th September. **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* Kelling Hard, Norfolk, 25th October. **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* Loch Bhasapol, Tiree, Argyll, 26th–30th August. **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Carr Lane Pools, Cheshire & Wirral, 28th August. **Pennington Marshes**, Hampshire, 23rd July. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Coll, Argyll, 25th August. **Keyhaven Marshes**, Hampshire, 19th–20th September. **Wilson's Snipe** *Gallinago delicata* Peninnis Head, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, at least four, 5th October. **Gull-billed Tern** Lodmoor RSPB, Dorset, 29th April. **Whiskered Tern** Great Pool, Tresco, Isles of Scilly, 13th September. **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* Cape Cornwall, Cornwall, 22nd October. **Bonaparte's Gull** Witchett Pool, Carmarthenshire, 26th May. **Laughing Gull** Marazion, Cornwall, 17th February. **Franklin's Gull** Southampton, Hampshire, 18th February. **'Heuglin's Gull'** *Larus fuscus heuglini* Alvecote Pools, Warwickshire, 17th September. **American Herring Gull** Mar Wick, Mainland, Orkney, 24th October. **'Dark-breasted Barn Owl'** *Tyto alba guttata* Wicklewood, Norfolk, 5th June. **Snowy Owl** Between Kyle of Tongue and Loch Eriboll, Highland, 5th July. **Pallid Swift** College Lake, Buckinghamshire, 25th May. **Flamborough Head**, Yorkshire, 20th October. **American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius* Sheriffmuir, Upper Forth, 1st January. **Gyr Falcon** Denge Marsh, Lydd, Kent, 30th August. **Butt of Lewis**, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, 4th–9th October. **Isabelline Shrike** Ridlington, Norfolk, 14th December. **Savi's Warbler** Fowlmere RSPB, Cambridgeshire, four, 25th–27th June. **Booted Warbler** Keyhaven Marshes, Hampshire, 30th June to 1st July. **Scolt Head**, Norfolk, 17th September. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Keyhaven Marshes, Hampshire, 14th June. **Vine Farm**, Bryher, Isles of Scilly, 1st–2nd September. **St Mary's Island**, Northumberland, 19th September. **'Black-bellied Dipper'** River Dee, Aberdeen, North-east Scotland, 6th March. **Thrush Nightingale** Forsnard, Highland, 3rd–4th May. **Isabelline Wheatear** Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 16th September. **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava cinereocapilla/iberiae* Periglis, St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, 25th April. **'Black-headed Wagtail'** *Motacilla flava feldegg* Loch of Funzie, Fetlar, Shetland, 25th May. **Citrine Wagtail** Beachley Point, Gloucestershire, 24th October. **Barns Ness**, Lothian, 28th August. **Grindon Lough**, Northumberland, 9th August. **Pechora Pipit** Observatory, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 30th September. **'African Chaffinch'** *Fringilla coelebs spodiogenys/africana* Scout Scar, Kendal, Cumbria, 22nd August. **Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus* Gosport, Hampshire, 7th September. **Two-barred Crossbill** Hoveton Hall, Norfolk, 30th October 2013 to 11th February.

2013 Lesser Scaup Alvecote Pools, Warwickshire, 6th December. **American Herring Gull** Hayle Estuary RSPB, Cornwall, 14th–15th October. **Pallid Swift** Pelistry and Carreg Dhu, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, 22nd October. **Lesser Grey Shrike** Birchmoor, Warwickshire, 20th September. **Arctic Warbler** Seafield, Lerwick, Mainland, Shetland, 6th–7th October. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** Bordon, Hampshire, 10th August. **'Eastern Subalpine Warbler'** Cruden Bay, North-east Scotland, 14th–16th May. **Skomer**, Pembrokeshire, 29th–30th May. **White's Thrush** Glenfeshie, Highland, 5th May. **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus alpestris* Weybourne Camp, Norfolk, 14th–25th October. **Siberian Stonechat** Gorie, Bressay, Shetland, 12th October. **'Black-headed Wagtail'** Filey, Yorkshire, 28th May. **'Hornemann's Redpoll'** Skaw, Unst, Shetland, 23rd September. **Lineholt**, Worcestershire, 30th–31st December. **Two-barred Crossbill** Grindon Lough, Northumberland, 14th September.

2012 Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* Bay of Kirkwall, Mainland, Orkney, 6th January to 31st March. **Pallid Harrier** Waxham, Norfolk, 9th May. **Belvide Resr**, Staffordshire, 14th April. **Whiskered Tern** Brandon Marsh, Warwickshire, 3rd July. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Vincoin, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 9th October.

2011 Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, 8th September. **Whiskered Tern** Cliffe, Kent, 16th September. **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonora* Aberlady Bay and Green Craig, Lothian, 12th October. **'Eastern Subalpine Warbler'** Holland Haven CP, Essex, 14th–19th August.

2010 'Black-headed Wagtail' Saltholme RSPB, Cleveland, 28th April. Cresswell Pond, Northumberland, 18th–21st April.

2009 Scopoli's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* At sea, c. 10 km S of St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, 4th July. Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens* Stewartby Lake, Bedfordshire, 9th–11th March. Queen Mother Resr, Berkshire, 3rd–8th February, 26th March, 20th–22nd April. Calvert, Buckinghamshire, 1st–2nd March. Willen Lake, Buckinghamshire, 7th–8th March. Rainham Marshes RSPB, Greater London/Essex, 12th March, 16th–21st March. Beddington SF, Greater London/Surrey, 21st–22nd April. Westmill Landfill, Ware, Hertfordshire, 15th March. 'Black-headed Wagtail' Holy Island, Northumberland, 26th April.

2007 Canada Goose *Branta canadensis interior/parvipes* Cuckmere Haven, Sussex, three, 27th January to 15th February.

2003 Hume's Warbler Wells Woods, Norfolk, 17th October.

2001 Forster's Tern Fetlar, Shetland, 25th May.

1999 Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* Southwold, Suffolk, 3rd January.

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Obituary

J. Bryan Nelson (1932–2015)

Older readers of *British Birds* are more likely to have met Bryan Nelson, who died at his home in Kirkcudbright, Dumfries & Galloway, on 29th June 2015 from a congenital heart defect, since in recent decades he rarely attended conferences or indeed left Scotland. However, most will be familiar with his work on the Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*, the North Atlantic's largest and arguably most impressive seabird, as a result of his pioneering studies on the Bass Rock in the early 1960s and lifelong championing of the species.

Born in Shipley, Yorkshire, in 1932, Bryan completed his secondary education at night school and obtained a scholarship that allowed him to take a zoology degree at the University of St Andrews. By then he was heavily into birdwatching, although his prize-winning honours thesis was on newts. Following 'four glorious and enjoyable years' in Scotland, he migrated south to Oxford for his DPhil. Initially he was based at the Edward Grey Institute but found following Blackbirds *Turdus merula* in the Botanic Gardens rather tame and quickly persuaded Niko Tinbergen to let him join his prestigious Behaviour Group. But what to study? Bryan had been enormously impressed by the Gannets on Ailsa Craig while ringing chicks there in 1953 so decided to study the species on the Bass Rock, in the Firth of Forth, with the legendary Mike Cullen as his main supervisor. Sir Hew Dalrymple, who owned the Bass Rock, gave permission for him to live and work on the island and so began a study that would endure for the rest of Bryan's life.

Behind many a successful man there is an exceptional woman. Such was the case here and, in 1960, Bryan married June Davison. Long pair-bonds are normal among seabirds and the Nelsons exemplified this trait. Thus for the next 55 years June shared the joys and hardships of fieldwork and typed the reams of handwritten drafts that flowed, apparently effortlessly, from Bryan's pen. After three gruelling seasons on the Bass Rock, Bryan wanted to compare the behaviour and

ecology of Gannets with other members of the Sulidae. Achieving this aim would occupy the next ten years and take the Nelsons to many exotic but logistically challenging locations in the Galapagos Islands, Gunaape Norte in Peru, Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean and Cape Kidnappers in New Zealand on a relentless quest for knowledge of the world's gannets and boobies.

In 1969 he joined the Zoology Department at Aberdeen University, subsequently becoming a Reader. His academic career was relatively short but coincided with one of the 'golden periods' of seabird research in Britain. Bryan's main interest was ethology, the study of animal behaviour, and he mixed with the top names such as Niko Tinbergen, Konrad Lorenz and Hans Kruuk. However, everything about gannets and boobies caught his attention and he soon became the world authority on the Sulidae giving superbly illustrated and amusingly animated lectures to undergraduates and conference-goers alike.

By modern standards his output of published papers was relatively modest, totalling about 20, almost all on sulids. Ethology is no longer fashionable but his lavishly illustrated papers in *British Birds* on 'The behaviour of the Gannet' (in 1965, *Brit. Birds* 58: 233–288, 313–336) and 'The behaviour of the young Gannet' (in 1966, *Brit. Birds* 59: 393–419) are classics of their time. Today he is perhaps best known for his work on the population dynamics of the Gannet (*Journal of Animal Ecology* 1966, 35: 443–470) and the factors influencing why the Gannet has a single-egg clutch (*Ibis* 1964, 106: 63–77). In the latter, he showed experimentally that Gannets on the Bass could easily rear two young despite invariably having a single-egg clutch. At the time these findings attracted considerable interest since a controversy was raging between Vero Wynne-Edwards (who was instrumental in Bryan going to Aberdeen and thought that birds were deliberately restricting their breeding output to put some control on numbers) and David Lack

(his initial supervisor at Oxford and who postulated that clutch size had evolved to reflect the most young that a pair could rear).

Bryan had relatively few research students but their projects focused on a wide range of species and study systems including Brown Hares *Lepus europaeus* in Aberdeenshire, laboratory experiments using Three-spined Sticklebacks *Gasterosteus aculeatus*, Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* in Scottish pinewoods and seabirds on Aldabra. Perhaps surprisingly, he supervised only one PhD project (by SW) on Gannets, a comparison of the ecology

and behaviour of birds on the Bass Rock and Ailsa Craig. Aberdeen also provided Bryan with a base where he could write and this he proceeded to do on an epic scale culminating in the publication in 1978 of not only the 1,000-page *The Sulidae: gannets and boobies* but also *The Gannet*, which quickly became a Poyser classic. Both were enlivened by Bryan's photographs and artwork by his lifelong friend John Busby, who predeceased Bryan by three weeks (see pp. 545–546).

As well as his academic work, Bryan was deeply committed to conservation. The achievement that undoubtedly gave him most satisfaction was the key role his research and tireless advocacy played in persuading the Australian Government to create a National Park on Christmas Island, thereby safeguarding the only breeding location of Abbott's Booby *Papadula abbotti* from catastrophic habitat destruction by phosphate mining.

Bryan retired from academia in 1982



Photographer unknown

375. June and Bryan Nelson, en route to the Bass Rock, in 1962.

exchanging a quirky house in the wilds of Aberdeenshire for equally characterful homes in warmer (but wetter) Dumfries and Galloway. There he continued to write, publishing another epic, *The Pelicaniformes* (2005), as well as several books aimed at a general audience including *The Atlantic Gannet* (2002). He also played a major role in the development of the Scottish Seabird Centre at North Berwick, where visitors can now watch Gannets on the Bass Rock in comfort via a webcam – a stark contrast to the harsh conditions experienced by Bryan and June in the 1960s. In 2006 he was awarded an MBE for services to seabirds. Fittingly, Bryan's last book to be published before his death, *On the Rocks* (2013), was a very personal and honest account of his rich and varied life.

He is survived by June, their twins, Becky and Simon, and two grandchildren.

Mike Harris and Sarah Wanless

Barnacle Geese feeding on potatoes

At the Loch Gruinart RSPB reserve on Islay, Argyll, 17 tons of feed potatoes were spread from the back of a trailer onto two grass fields in December 2014 as part of a trial to provide an alternative food source for Greenland White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons flavirostris*. The potatoes actually provided a treat for the wintering Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis*.

The potatoes were spread in two fields, with five tons put out on 4th December and a further 12 tons on 20th January 2015. Initially nothing touched the potatoes; in fact the geese appeared to be avoiding them. Eventually, the Barnacle Geese started to graze the grass between the spuds. A few started to try the potatoes on 21st December,

and then the trend gradually spread. The first five tons were eaten over a period of three weeks; the second application (of 12 tons) also took three weeks to finish. On average, almost 800 Barnacle Geese were feeding on the potatoes at any one time through the two three-week periods.

Having found the potatoes to be edible, the Barnacle Geese fed on them almost continuously, leaving only rarely and even feeding through the night. Barnacle Geese are largely folia feeders and have not been recorded as feeding on potatoes to any great extent, although small numbers have been recorded feeding with Pink-footed Geese *A. brachyrhynchus* on spoiled potato crops.

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James How



376. Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* feeding on potatoes at Loch Gruinart RSPB reserve, Islay, Argyll, January 2015.

Little and Common Terns sharing a nest scrape on Blakeney Point, Norfolk

On 1st June 2014, we conducted a survey of nesting Little *Sternula albifrons*, Common *Sterna hirundo* and Arctic Terns *S. paradisaea* on the tip of Blakeney Point, Norfolk. During the survey, PN discovered a scrape containing two Little Tern eggs and a Common Tern egg (plate 377a).

A trail camera was positioned overlooking

the scrape on 5th June. This revealed that the scrape was being incubated by a pair of Little Terns. However, Common Terns were present at or by the scrape on a daily basis (plate 377b). The Common Terns appeared to try to incubate the eggs whenever the Little Terns were not present. Each time this happened, one of the Little Terns would attack and drive

them away from the scrape (plate 377c).

The trail camera was removed on 12th June, ahead of predicted tidal flooding. Fortunately, the nest was not flooded and on 19th June the scrape was found to contain the Common Tern egg and beside it a single Little Tern chick, aged less than two days (plate 377d). Presumably, the other Little Tern chick had hatched and been predated, possibly by gulls.

On 24th June, the Little Tern chick was no longer present, presumably also predated. The Common Tern egg, however, was starting to hatch. The trail camera footage showed a Common Tern at the scrape until 26th June. A visit on 27th June revealed that the chick did not fully hatch and had died in the shell. The camera showed a Little Tern touching the egg containing the dead Common Tern chick with its bill on 26th and 30th June (plate 377e).

The average incubation time for Little Terns is 21 days, and for Common Terns 23 days (Cabot & Nisbet 2013), so we estimate that the Little Tern eggs were laid around 28th May and the Common Tern egg was laid some 2–3 days later.

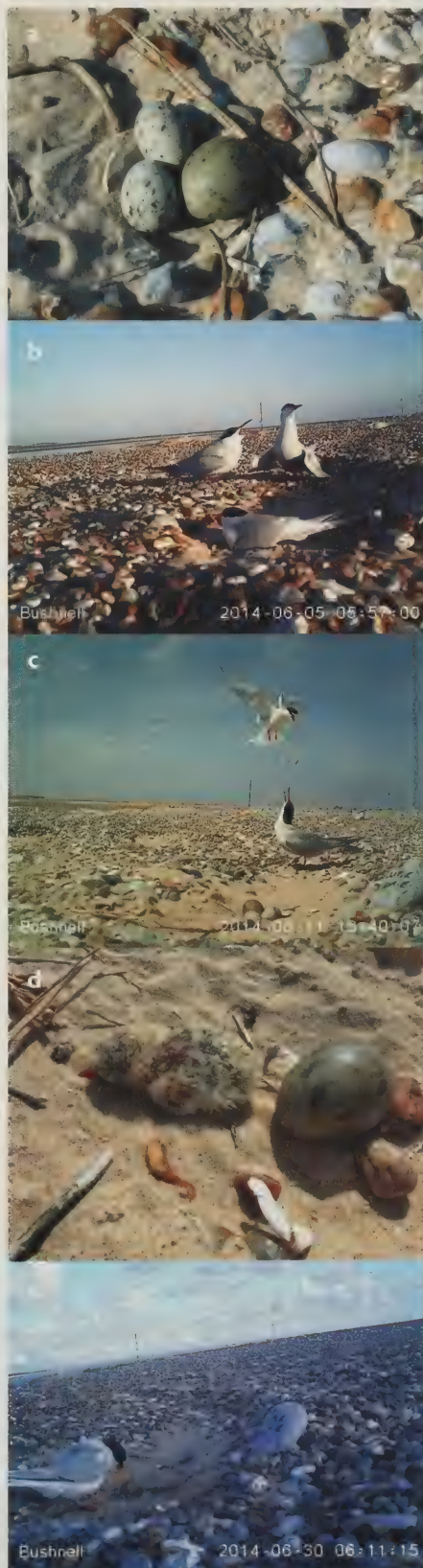
Contact was made with other tern breeding sites in Britain and also the Netherlands, and we found records of two female Common Terns sharing a scrape (Cabot & Nisbet 2013), Common and Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* dumping eggs in each other's scrapes (Beijersbergen 2012) and also Little Terns sharing a scrape with Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula* (RSPB pers. comm.). However, as far as we are aware, this is the first known case of Common and Little Terns laying in the same scrape.

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 Het Zeeuwse Landschap, Heinkenszand.

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377. Images showing a Little Tern scrape containing a Common Tern egg, on Blakeney Point, Norfolk in June 2014. Images show the two Little Tern eggs and one Common Tern egg (a, 1st June), Common Terns beside an incubating Little Tern (b, 5th June), a Little Tern attacking a Common Tern at the nest (c, 11th June), Little Tern chick beside Common Tern egg (d, 19th June) and adult Little Tern investigating the egg containing the dead Common Tern chick (e, 30th June).



Paul Nichols, Sarah Johnson, trail camera footage

Reviews

Inglorious: conflict in the uplands

By Mark Avery

Bloomsbury, 2015

Hbk, 304pp. ISBN 978-1-4729-1741-6

Wild Sounds price £14.99, quote BB128

Mark Avery's impassioned book calls for a legal ban on driven grouse shooting in the UK. As a scientist and former Conservation Director at the RSPB for 13 years, he is singularly well-informed; and now, being out of harness, he feels unconstrained but enraged by the virtual extermination of the Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* as a breeding bird in England. His book attempts to explain the science in layman's terms, and sometimes becomes a diary or an imaginary venture into a better future, when it starts to ramble. But his solution is extreme, and some might see it as analogous to banning farming to save the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*.

However, the evidence that he marshals for the deleterious effects of driven grouse shooting is impressive. For the Hen Harrier, legally protected, the UK population ought to be about 2,600 pairs, yet stands currently at between 500 and 800 pairs (and in England, where there should be about 330 pairs, there are around 12 (*Brit. Birds* 108: 502)). Hen Harriers undoubtedly have a real impact on breeding Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, as the Langholm trials showed, but nevertheless it is illegal to kill them. Not all grouse-moor owners or gamekeepers are guilty of criminal behaviour, but some of them are, and enough to affect the whole population of harriers. This is partly because, unlike Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* that stay close to their natal area, Hen Harriers range over hundreds of kilometres, and the shooting of some in one part of the country can have an impact throughout the range. Grouse-moor owners might be able to mitigate the effect of harriers on the numbers of grouse on their land by diversionary feeding, but do not do so. Some prefer to lobby for permission to undertake 'brood management' – taking chicks from nests and rearing them elsewhere, prior to release – a solution that would not work anyway because of the fluidity of the population, which means that the released birds would not stay where they had been released but instead rejoin the wider population. Others simply evade the law, which is easy to do due to the remoteness of the moors and strong commu-

nity sympathies that protect local keepers.

Though the effect on harriers is the greatest, grouse-moor persecution extends to Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus*, Common Buzzards, Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis*, Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* and White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla*. The extent of raptor persecution is known to keep population levels well below their potential. Nor is this the end of the story. In parts of the Scottish Highlands, Mountain Hares *Lepus timidus* have been virtually exterminated by keepers trying to keep the tick burden on grouse as low as possible, while the use of sheep as 'tick mops' to pick up the insects and kill them by sheep dipping five times a year involves the use of pesticides in the environment on a new scale.

Then there is the impact of the muirburn (burning) on carbon storage and flood control. Muirburn is considered essential for high grouse numbers by encouraging heather regeneration. If done carelessly or too intensively, as is often the case, it can have a damaging effect on peat bogs, releasing stored carbon and burning off cover that would otherwise absorb water. Serious flooding at Blubberhouses in the Yorkshire Dales recently has been attributed locally to the excessive burning of the moors above the village. It is hard to quantify the extent of the problem, but certainly in parts of the Highlands, such as Deeside, heather burning has become far more intensive than it was even a few years ago. The destruction of wilderness caused by tracks driven over the moors and by fences put up to keep in the sheep mops is also unacceptable to those who enjoy the open country.

Are there any good sides to the management of driven grouse moors? Evidence supports the claim that numbers of breeding waders such as Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* are higher where muirburn and legal predator control of corvids, mustelids and Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes* is



practised. Mark Avery does not dispute this, though he quails at the scale of the killing needed to achieve it. Good management of bogs by filling in old drainage ditches is carried out on some estates. Otherwise the defence of driven grouse moors rests on the scale of employment generated in remote rural communities (about 1,500 people in England and Wales and 1,100 in Scotland), the numbers who enjoy the sport (estimated by Avery at about 17,000 but by others as more), and by the revenue it generates. Fewer than half of Scottish moors make a profit, but 96% of all revenue from grouse moors in Scotland comes from driven moors (as opposed to those where the grouse are walked up or shot over pointer dogs). More intensive management, however, is increasing the rate of profit, as well as increasing the unacceptable impacts of moorland management.

So it is reasonable to expect that something should be done about it. But is a ban the correct answer? In Scotland, the RSPB has been calling not

for a ban but for a licensing system, which would entail inspection of the estates before driven grouse shooting was allowed. This is more flexible and would protect good managers at the expense of bad ones. A weakness of Avery's book is that he says much less about Scotland than about England, but devolution makes it impossible to legislate at Westminster for the entire UK. A licensing system might be more likely to attract the support of politicians, though I would not rate the chances of a proposal along these lines passing at Holyrood any time soon. The grouse-moor interest is probably stronger than the conservation interest in Westminster now, and the former is lobbying for legal control of raptors through licences to kill Buzzards. So Avery's call will probably go unheeded for the present but, as we all know, politics change when popular pressure builds up. Maybe licensing is a better solution than banning, though.

Chris Smout

The Life of Buzzards

By Peter Dare

Whittles Publishing, 2015

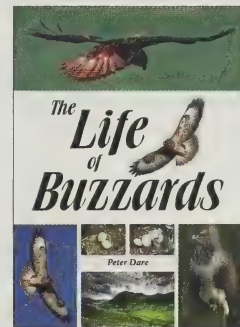
Pbk, xii + 292pp; many colour illustrations and figures

ISBN 978-184995-130-2, £22.99, **post-free from BB Bookshop**

Peter Dare's PhD thesis, (un)published in 1961, has long remained a well-kept secret, quoted by many but read by few. Titbits of his work subsequently found their way into handbooks and reviews but, certainly for us continentals, the real data never came within grasp (although in the study of Th. Mebs in *Journal für Ornithologie* 105: 247–306, published in 1964, we had an excellent counterweight). When this book was first announced, I hoped for detailed information from his study in Dartmoor in the 1950s. The book turned out to be so much more. This is no easy reprint of old work, but an up-to-date overview of work on the Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* in Britain (15 sites across Scotland, England and Wales), including the author's ongoing studies in leisure time in Dartmoor (until 1969), Snowdonia (mid 1970s to 1982) and Suffolk (from the 1980s onwards). The last site was initially as bleak as can be as far as Buzzards were concerned, but the more than five-fold increase in Britain in the past decades at last also overwhelmed the eastern parts of the country. The discovery of a nest in East Anglia in 2006 must have been exhilarating.

Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* play an important role in the book, which is not surprising given the author's focus on the

impact of the Rabbit crash on Buzzards in the 1950s, following the introduction of myxomatosis. The suggestion is that Buzzards suffered, and that breeding success and productivity only started to recover after Rabbit numbers had recovered (the latter as late as the 1990s, albeit based on game-bag indices). The implicit link between Rabbit and Buzzard fortunes in Britain, i.e. increase in numbers and expansion of range since the 1990s, is apparent only. The long-lived Buzzard typically alternates between high and low breeding success in the footsteps of a spike in vole or Rabbit numbers and, in the longer term, density-dependent effects on reproduction are well known (as, for example, shown in Robin Prytherch's study, in Avon; *Brit. Birds* 106: 264–279). However, Buzzards are generalist predators, and the decline of a major prey item will rarely have long-term effects. The trigger behind



Britain's upsurge in Buzzard numbers is therefore sought in slackening persecution. This may well be, but remember that Buzzard numbers on the Continent – where persecution is more localised and not nearly so intensive as in Britain – also increased dramatically, despite crashes in Rabbit numbers after the advent of Rabbit viral haemorrhagic disease, substantial and lasting declines in vole numbers (mainly Common Vole *Microtus arvalis*) and steep increases in intra-guild predation. Clearly, Buzzards are highly adaptable, numbers depending on a suite of environmental conditions, not all of which, nor their interplay, are known. Such and other caveats in research are pointed out throughout the text of this book. For any students or pensionados looking for study subjects, here is the ideal vehicle.

There can be no doubt that the recent proliferation of the use of loggers in ecological studies will change our perception of what exactly drives Buzzards. Peter Dare's book is a reminder of

the time that fieldwork was precisely that: being in the field from sunrise to sunset, outwitting the birds (or at least trying to), cycling 40 km daily to reach nests, examining broods up to four times a day, collecting prey remains, observing from hides, and devising experiments to validate pellets as a means to quantify diet. In fact, this book shows that interpretation of logger data can only be biologically meaningful when embedded in knowledge based on hardcore fieldwork. Quick and easy? Forget it. I love this book, for its laudation of uncompromising fieldwork. The inclusion of tables and figures, with data from the 1950s through the 2000s, is a much-appreciated bonus. It shouldn't deter the more casual reader as the text lacks jargon and is sprinkled with anecdotes. This book is truly an inspirational successor to Colin Tubbs's *The Buzzard*, published as long ago as 1974.

Rob G. Bijlsma

Taming the Flood

By Jeremy Purseglove
Collins, 2015

Hbk, 397pp; colour and black-and-white illustrations, maps and diagrams. ISBN 978-0-00-812935-4
Wild Sounds price £22.99, **post-free in UK**

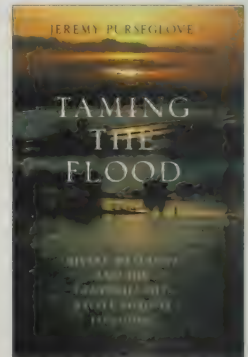
The subtitle of this superb book – *rivers, wetlands and the centuries-old battle against flooding* – says it all. First published almost 30 years ago, it has been acclaimed as the standard work on the subject. In great detail, it sets out the long and complex history of our relationship with one of the most important parts of our environment, and, of course, with its wildlife. The author was a river engineer and then an environmental consultant: he knows what he is talking about, and he talks about it supremely well. The copious illustrations add to the pleasure of a really good read – so it is a shame that some of the photographs have been reproduced so badly.

This is not a revised edition in the normal sense: the original chapters appear as before, but with footnotes adding to or updating them as appropriate. The story which finished 30 years ago ended on a high and hopeful note, with a clearly discernible swing away from old, narrow attitudes towards much more environmentally friendly river and wetland management. The footnotes, broadly speaking, tell of further encouraging developments since the mid 1980s.

A final, completely new chapter celebrates three

decades of all manner of positive achievements, as what Jeremy Purseglove calls 'working with rivers, rather than against them' has increasingly become the norm. The details of how wetland birds have fared are impressively up to date, and I would be willing to bet that the same can be said about other wildlife, for which my knowledge is much less complete. Then we are brought down to earth with a bump. It is not just that there is still so much to be done, or that relatively new threats from climate change are bound to add to an already complicated equation. Recent disastrous flooding events, which have been frighteningly numerous and widespread, are reawakening the old calls for drastic dredging, draining and river canalisation, which could put the clock back and undo so much of what has been achieved. We have seen, too, some signs of returning antagonism towards what the environmental movement stands for in relation to wetlands... Where will it all end?

Mike Everett

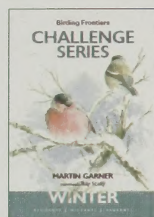


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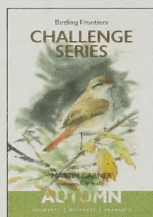
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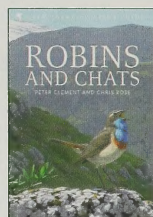
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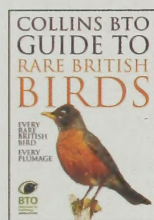
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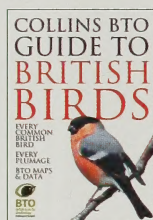
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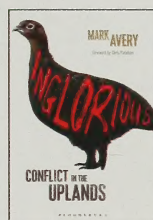
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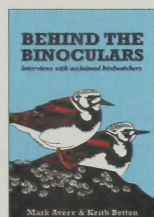
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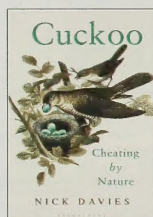
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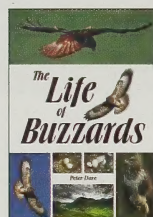
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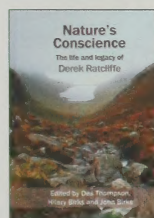
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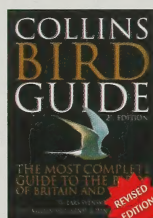
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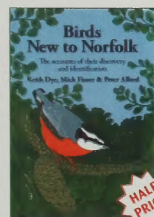
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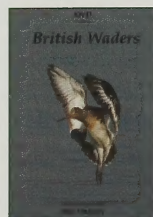
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
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
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



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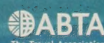
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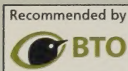


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